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# EXODUS FROM CONCORDIA

A Report on the 1974 Walkout



by

The Board of Control Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

## **EXODUS FROM CONCORDIA: A Report on the 1974 Walkout.**

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Publicity Office

**Dedicated to the Five Professors**

Ralph Bohlmann

Richard Klann

Robert Preus

Martin Scharlemann

Lorenz Wunderlich

whose faithful and courageous witness in a time of crisis awakened and encouraged others to contend for the faith.



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## PREFACE

On June 21, 1973, just prior to the New Orleans synodical convention, Dr. Roland Wiederaenders, then Synod's First Vice-president, wrote:

Despite repeated efforts we have not dealt honestly with our pastors and people. We have refused to state our changing theological position in open, honest, forthright, simple and clear words. Over and over again we said that nothing was changing when all the while we were aware of changes taking place.

Either we should have informed our pastors and people that changes were taking place and, if possible, convinced them from Scripture that these changes were in full harmony with "Thus saith the Lord!" or we should have stopped playing games as we gave assurance that no changes were taking place. With increasing measure the synodical trumpet has been giving an uncertain sound. . . .

Quite generally our pastors and almost entirely our laity became more and more confused. Confusion led to uncertainty. Uncertainty led to polarization. Polarization destroyed creditability. Loss of creditability destroyed the possibility for meaningful discussion. The loss of meaningful discussion set the stage for a head on collision.

This statement by a respected synodical churchman is an apt analysis of the events and attitudes that led to one of the most significant events in the history of American Lutheranism — the 1974 walkout of the vast majority of faculty members and students at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis and their formation of an opposition seminary.

Much that has been written about these events, particularly by those partial to the former faculty members of Concordia Seminary, has been based more on hearsay than on facts. Synodical and Seminary administrators, particularly the Board of Control, have been accused of evil, injustice, corruption, moral bankruptcy, and similar vices for the decisions they made in those fateful days. What are the facts? What really happened? The people of the church have a right to know. As the Swiss author Henri Frederic Amiel has written: "Truth is violated by falsehood, but it is outraged by silence."

It is in the interest of dealing "honestly with our pastors and people," to quote Dr. Wiederaenders, that the Board of Control has written and published this account. It focuses on the events at Concordia Seminary

following the 1973 synodical convention in New Orleans and culminating in the walkout in early 1974, after sketching the background of those events in the initial chapters. Throughout the book, the effort to have the facts speak for themselves has resulted in copious citation and documentation rather than extensive interpretative commentary.

In the preparation of this book, the Board of Control has gathered thousands of pages of firsthand documentation. Television and radio broadcasts dealing with the 1974 events were again reviewed, as were the numerous accounts in both church and secular journals and newspapers. Several key figures in the story, as well as large numbers of students, were interviewed. Particular attention was given to the records and reports of a number of student groups active during the 1973-1974 school year. The Board of Control herewith acknowledges the capable assistance of the Reverend Gregory Smith, a 1975 Seminary graduate now serving as an administrative assistant, in gathering and organizing these materials. The Board also expresses its deep appreciation to the hundreds of laymen, especially in the St. Louis area, whose generous contributions have made the publication of this book possible.

Much more remains to be said than could be included in this publication. However, it is hoped that even this modest effort will assist the Synod in understanding that the 1974 events at Concordia Seminary had their roots in what Dr. Wiederaenders called the "changing theological position" at the Seminary. For, in understanding that, our beloved Synod may by God's grace be led to even greater commitment and dedication to the preservation and promulgation of our precious Lutheran heritage.

Concordia Seminary Board of Control  
April, 1977

## DOCTRINAL CONCERNS IN THE SIXTIES

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has always been vitally concerned with maintaining doctrinal purity and confessional unity. As stated in Article III of its Constitution, the first objective of the Synod is “the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith and a united defense against schism and sectarianism.” Dr. J.A.O. Preus, President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, was expressing the traditional viewpoint of the Synod when he told the delegates to the 1971 synodical convention, “Theology and doctrine are fundamental to our entire task, for doctrine is nothing less than the articulation of the message of reconciliation in Jesus Christ.” (1971 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 51) Throughout its history, the Synod has endeavored to remain faithful to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the historic creeds of the Church. It was never the purpose of the Synod to create doctrine, but rather to confess faithfully the teachings of the Scriptures. As a result, the Synod bound no one to new exegetical interpretations, but only reaffirmed those doctrines which were taught by the Scriptures themselves and summarized and explained by the historic Lutheran Confessions.

### CONVENTION ACTIONS [^](#)

Ever since its beginning in 1847, the Synod found it necessary to apply the Word of God to doctrinal questions troubling the church. Numerous essays, resolutions, and formal statements dealing with doctrinal matters appear in the proceedings of the Synod's regular conventions. For several decades, the Synod's attention increasingly has been given to questions dealing with the authority and interpretation of Holy Scripture. Many of these questions reflected a growing unrest in the Synod with the teaching of professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In spite of assurances from Seminary and synodical officials that nothing had changed doctrinally, members of the Synod continued to express concern. In response to a number of overtures, the Synod's 1962 Cleveland convention reaffirmed its doctrine of Scripture:

**Resolved**, that we reaffirm our belief in the plenary verbal inspiration of Scripture, the inerrancy of Scripture, and that Scripture is in all its words and parts the very Word of God, as taught in the Scripture itself and in the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

**Resolved**, that we reaffirm the Scripturally implicit hermeneutical

principles that the Bible does not contradict itself and that the clear passages of Scripture must interpret the less clear. (Resolution 3-16, 1962 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 104)

The same convention also resolved “to emphasize the sure truth and comfort of Scripture regarding the immortality of the soul and the resurrection of the flesh/’ in response to various presentations and articles by professors at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, which were “unclear and may be understood to have a meaning not in accord with the teachings of Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions.” (Resolution 3-18, p. 106) These resolutions reflect the Synod's concern about the use of the so-called historical-critical method by some of the Seminary professors. A basic characteristic of this method is that it regards and interprets the Bible as a human document like all other historical documents. As a result, its users invariably claim to find errors and even doctrinal diversity within the Bible and frequently question the miraculous, supernatural, and revelatory aspects of the Scriptures. It is not surprising that synodical pastors and laity became increasingly troubled by the use of this destructive method of Biblical interpretation at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. Dr. Martin Franzmann, distinguished professor of New Testament theology at the Seminary, had severely criticized the method by writing:

The historical-critical method cannot be considered as merely a theologically-neutral tool or technique of interpretation, comparable to textual criticism, grammar or lexicography. None of these latter undertakes to pass a value judgment on the historical substance of revelation; the historical-critical method does. The historical method assigns to the interpreter the capacity and the authority to distinguish between “the facts which matter and the facts which don't.” . . .

Those who advocate and practice this method are required, therefore, to ask themselves whether such a method is compatible with their ordination vows, which bound them to Scripture and the absolute obedience of faith and pledged them to the Lutheran Confessions.... It is not a question of coming into conflict with a peculiarly Missourian tradition or idiosyncrasy; the issue raised by the acceptance of this method involves a conflict with the bases of our Lutheran, Christian, existence.

At the Detroit convention of 1965, the Synod again declared its “unwavering loyalty to the Scriptures as the inspired and inerrant Word of God,” and

**Resolved**, that the Synod penitently and fervently pray the Lord of the church to keep us faithful in the truth of His Word, preserve us from all error, and mercifully remove any error when it arises among us. (Resolution 2-01, 1965 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 94)

The Synod also reaffirmed its belief that the Old Testament prophecies of the Savior are fulfilled in Jesus Christ (Resolution 2-26, p. 100), that the events recorded in the book of Jonah are historical (Resolution 2-27, p. 100),

that Moses wrote the first five books of the Bible and the eighth century prophet Isaiah wrote the entire book of Isaiah (Resolution 2-35, p. 103) and that Christ is the only way to heaven. (Resolution 2-20, p. 99)

At the New York convention in 1967, the Synod once more found it necessary to state its position on the Scriptures, and

**Resolved**, that we pray in this day of theological unrest and confusion that God by His mercy keep us faithful to His inspired and inerrant Word “as the only rule and norm of faith and practice” and to the Lutheran Confessions as a true and faithful exposition of that Word. (Resolution 2-16, 1967 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 92)

The Synod then reaffirmed its stand on certain doctrines, namely:

- 1) That the Holy Scriptures are the inerrant Word of God;
  - 2) That Christ made atonement for the sins of the whole world;
  - 3) That Christ rose from the dead glorified in His flesh;
  - 4) That the soul of man does not cease to exist after death;
  - 5) That only those who believe in Christ receive eternal life.
- (Resolution 2-30, p. 95)

The same convention also restated the Synod's position on the creation of the world and man's fall into sin. The convention emphasized that the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions teach that Adam and Eve were real historical human beings, that their fall into sin occurred at a specific point in history, and that the subsequent inherent corruption of all human beings is essential to the clear and pure teaching of the Gospel. The Synod then resolved to “reject and condemn all those world views, philosophical theories, exegetical interpretations, and other hypotheses which pervert these Biblical teachings and thus obscure the Gospel.” (Resolution 2-31, p. 95) In reasserting what had long been considered its official position on these doctrines, the Synod was responding to the growing unrest created by lectures and conference papers delivered by various Seminary professors and others. Its response was intended to remind such professors of the Synod's unwavering loyalty to the Scriptures, and to encourage them to honor and uphold the Synod's official doctrinal position.

At Denver in 1969, the Synod in convention felt compelled once again to reaffirm the Synod's position on the Word of God. In calling attention to similar resolutions passed at Detroit in 1965 and New York in 1967, the Synod resolved “that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the verbally inspired and the infallible written Word of God, according to which all preaching, teaching, and living is to be ordered and judged.” (Resolution 2-03, 1969 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 85) After stating that the four Gospels “invite historical investigation and are to be taken seriously as historical documents,” the Synod also

**Resolved**, That the 1969 convention of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod affirms the historicity of the New Testament, making this affirmation as an act of faith in the incarnation of our

Lord as attested and presented in living reality by the spirit of truth in words which He Himself has taught. (Resolution 2-16, p. 88)

## DOCTRINAL STATEMENTS [^](#)

At all four conventions held during the 1960's, the Synod also found it necessary to encourage its members to honor and uphold synodically adopted doctrinal statements and resolutions.

At various times throughout its history, the Synod has adopted doctrinal statements in order to express its witness to important issues of the day. Based on the truths set forth in Holy Scripture and explained in the Lutheran Confessions, these doctrinal statements have served as the Synod's response to the problems and controversies which have confronted the church from time to time. For example, in 1881, the Synodical Conference adopted the "Thirteen Theses on Election and Conversion" as a simple and clear statement of its beliefs. In 1932, the Synod adopted "A Brief Statement of the Doctrinal Position of the Missouri Synod" which dealt with questions and controversies among Lutherans and with theological issues disturbing the church. More recently, the Synod adopted the "Common Confession, Part I" in 1950, and in 1956 "Part II," as statements in harmony with Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. In 1959, the Synod adopted "The Statement on Scripture" as a correct exposition of the doctrine of the Scriptures about themselves. At Cleveland in 1962, in response to continuing concern that these doctrinal statements were being ignored or even opposed, the Synod

**Resolved,** That the Synod beseech all its members by the mercies of God to honor and uphold the doctrinal content of these synodically adopted statements, . . . and be it further

**Resolved,** That all who believe these synodically adopted doctrinal statements to be faulty in their formulation of Scriptural doctrine, or to have other deficiencies, be asked to present their concerns to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. (Resolution 3- 17, 1962

**Convention Proceedings,** p. 106)

This resolution was reaffirmed in its entirety by the Synod in convention at Detroit (1965), New York (1967), and Denver (1969), but these actions failed to solve the growing doctrinal problems in the Synod.

## DOCTRINAL DISCUSSIONS IN THE EARLY SIXTIES [^](#)

It is quite evident from convention overtures of the 1960's that many members of the Synod had become deeply troubled over various doctrinal positions expressed by certain professors at the St. Louis Seminary. In fact, a substantial number of the doctrinal resolutions passed by the synodical conventions of the 1960's involved, directly or indirectly, the teaching at the Seminary. In emphasizing the importance of maintaining the unity of the true faith in accordance with the objectives of the Synod, such convention actions frequently called upon the Synod's various boards and officers to

carry out their responsibilities in preserving doctrinal unity and maintaining discipline.

However, it became painfully evident that doctrinal difficulties were not being resolved. Instead, there was an acceleration and intensification of complaints and concerns. Publications such as **The Confessional Lutheran** and **Lutheran News** (later renamed **Christian News**) recorded page after page of photocopied conference essays, journal articles, and lectures given by St. Louis Seminary professors whose new approaches to matters of Biblical interpretation and other theological questions caused serious concern.

Disagreements developed concerning the nature and authority of Holy Scripture, the authorship of various books of the Old Testament, the historicity of miracles and other events, the reliability of the words of Jesus, and the predictive nature of Messianic prophecies in the Old Testament. Concern over doctrine at Concordia Seminary led to widespread unrest when it became apparent that little was being done at the synodical or Seminary level to resolve the doctrinal problems. To be sure, synodical president Dr. John Behnken attempted to intervene personally at Concordia Seminary by interviewing new professors. Both President Behnken and the man who succeeded him in 1962, Dr. Oliver Harms, held many conversations and exchanged a number of letters with responsible Seminary faculty members about the growing problem, but the concerns remained.

The doctrinal tensions within the Synod surfaced in a prominent way at the 1962 Cleveland synodical convention. Resolution 3-19 called for the removal of Dr. Martin Scharlemann, a member of the faculty at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, from his office of Seminary professor for having "publicly expressed teachings contrary to the clear doctrine of Scripture" and for failure to make a "clear-cut and decisive correction of these errors." (1962 **Convention Proceedings**, pp. 106-107) This resolution dealt with certain essays written by Dr. Scharlemann which had become the source of much difficulty, disturbance and confusion within the Synod. Although Dr. Scharlemann had intended his essays only for exploratory discussion by faculty members and pastors, he issued an apology before the assembled convention. He stated:

I deeply regret and am heartily sorry over the part that I played in contributing to the present unrest in the Synod. ... I ask of my fellow members in the Synod that they forgive these actions of mine which have contributed to the tensions in the church. (1962 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 107)

In response, the Synod rose to its feet in tribute to Dr. Scharlemann and reaffirmed his teaching ministry by a standing vote of 650-20.

Nevertheless, the same convention directed, admonished, and exhorted its professors "to preserve and promote pure and correct teaching" and thus

**Resolved**, That those entrusted with the solemn duty of preparing



future pastors, teachers, and missionaries at all our colleges and seminaries continue to teach in full accord with the sacred Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions. (Resolution 3-10, p. 103)

In order that "the Synod speak with a unified, single voice in [doctrinal] matters," the 1962 convention also established a Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) to deal with the doctrinal problems that had now spread beyond the St. Louis Seminary.

After the Cleveland convention, the Synod's Council of Presidents again continued to study the matter of doctrinal difficulties in the Synod involving the Concordia Seminary faculty. Already in January, 1963, the minutes of the Council of Presidents report:

The problems which are troubling the church are not imaginary, a matter of mere semantics; they are real. The November conference made it clear that the Council of Presidents and the seminary faculties need to address themselves to these problems with great earnestness.

Later in the year at the Council of Presidents' meeting on December 2, 1963, Dr. Roland Wiederaenders, then Synod's First Vice-president, reported that a committee which evaluated the first two meetings found that "the problems which troubled the church largely revolved around the doctrine concerning Scripture" and that "these problems are not imaginary, a matter of semantics. They are very real." He then elaborated on problems having to do with inspiration, the historicity of Adam and Eve, the fall into sin, and other matters related to the doctrine of Holy Scripture.

In answering his own question as to why these matters had become a problem in the Missouri Synod, Dr. Wiederaenders pointed to "subtle forces which . . . lead us away from the 'Thus saith the Lord' of Holy Scripture." Among such forces,

we list our sin-cursed understanding, our rebellious flesh, our pride, our unwarranted respect and admiration for the wisdom of the world, our fear that we shall be out of step with the scientific thinking of our age, our shame to confess childlike submission to Holy Scripture, the temptation to use profane literature as a norm whereby to judge Holy Scripture which is given by inspiration of God.

Dr. Wiederaenders concluded his address with a call for action:

The time has come for the College of Presidents and the Seminary Faculties to realize that the one great need in our church today is to give clear answers to questions that have been and are being asked because some of the trumpet sounds in our midst have been unclear.

However, in spite of such pleas for openness and honesty, doctrinal problems at the Seminary continued to worsen.

## THE HABEL ESSAY [^](#)

During 1963 and 1964, many in the Synod became concerned about the symbolic interpretation given to Genesis 2 and 3 (the fall narrative) in an essay by a St. Louis Seminary professor, Dr. Norman Habel. In this essay, Dr. Habel defended the position "that it is legitimate to consider this narrative a literary form which may be described as a 'symbolical religious history.' " (**Form and Meaning of the Fall Narrative**, pp. 22f.) The Synod's Council of Presidents, after intensive discussions with both Seminary faculties, expressed serious concerns about the exegetical and hermeneutical principles and approach as presented in the Habel essay. Determined that the theological faculties should not use or teach such principles, the presidents resolved: "We request that the president of Synod transmit to President Fuerbringer of the St. Louis faculty our reactions, our consensus, and our concerns at this time." (COP Minutes, September, 1963)

Several pastoral conferences also voiced their concerns about the Habel essay. For example, in a resolution dated May 26, 1965, the pastors of Iowa District West judged the method of interpretation to be unacceptable and asked that its use be terminated. The district articulated its concerns in an overture to the 1965 Detroit synodical convention. In response to that overture, the Synod

**Resolved**, That in recognition of the concerns expressed by Iowa District West the Synod advise the District —

1. To present all concerns involving hermeneutical method to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations and
2. To direct any request pertaining to the classroom teaching of this material to the appropriate Board of Control, as specified in the synodical **Handbook**. (Resolution 2-37, 1965 **Convention Proceedings**, pp. 103-104)

## DR. HARMS AND THE SEMINARY [^](#)

In its 1965 Detroit convention, the Synod openly acknowledged "that anti- Scriptural teaching has made inroads within the Synod." The Synod stated:

Whereas, The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod penitently acknowledges that it is experiencing its own problems in the area of doctrine and practice; . . . therefore be it

**Resolved**, That we ask all members of the Synod to evaluate current theological literature in the light of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and in view of synodically adopted doctrinal statements,. . . and be it further

**Resolved**, That we urge the members of the Synod to implore the blessings of the Holy Spirit on the officials of the Synod as they continue to exercise forthright leadership in the supervision of doctrine within the Synod. (Resolution 2-23, pp. 99-100)

In response to the Synod's request for "forthright leadership in the supervision of doctrine," Dr. Oliver R. Harms, then President of The

Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, made an attempt to ascertain the doctrinal position of the St. Louis Seminary faculty. He was beset with numerous requests from pastors and laymen in the Synod to determine the doctrinal situation at the Seminary and to obtain public statements from the faculty with regard to various doctrinal resolutions that were passed at the synodical conventions.

President Harms relayed these concerns to the faculty of Concordia Seminary in a letter dated December 17, 1965, in which he requested the faculty to put in writing their statement of beliefs. He suggested that a failure in communication had given the impression that they had departed from the teachings of the sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran symbolical books.

The faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, complied with Dr. Harms' request in a letter dated January 20, 1966, which stated:

We are mindful of the expressions of confidence in us which you as president of our church body have voiced in the past, and we rejoice in them. What follows is a re-statement of what we have already said in the promises made at our ordinations and installations.

The faculty statement did not satisfy Dr. Harms. On February 15, 1966, he requested further clarification. He wrote to President Alfred Fuerbringer as follows:

Dear Fibby:

First of all, thank you very much for the time you, the department heads of the faculty, and the faculty have spent on my request for help so that a clear answer may be given again to persons who accuse members of the faculty of Concordia Seminary of not adhering strictly to Scripture and the historic Lutheran Confessions and also our own positions expressed in resolutions of conviction. I think you did a very fine job on the questions I posed recently and gave an answer that under ordinary circumstances should make the hearts of people glad. I find, however, that our present needs perhaps need some kind of a statement which denies the contrary to what you have said so well in the letter from the faculty. For example, there is a congregation with which we will have to deal both on the district and synodical level, a congregation that threatens to leave the synod; perhaps I should say more correctly, whose pastor is seeking to persuade it to leave the synod. We will have to give a few specific answers there which I think are contained in the suggestion I am making. I am hoping that the faculty and you may concur with my desire to have an antithetical statement placed into the letter after the third paragraph on the second page, that is, after the paragraph which ends "a church in mission." I will be happy to leave the specific wording to you. Here is the sense of what I would like to say:

Having said this, we reject the accusation that any faculty member today teaches that "the truth of the Bible is not

truth," that "the factuality and truthfulness of Scripture is denied," and that "the Bible contains errors."

Furthermore, we are amazed that anyone should accuse a member of our faculty of denying the "resurrection of Christ's flesh" and our own resurrection.

We deplore the fact that anyone should accuse a member of our faculty of denying the historical correctness of Genesis 1, 2, and 3 as well as denying God's creation of all beings by His almighty power as taught in these chapters.

My colleagues, whom I am sending to California to meet the situation which has arisen there as described above, feel that these antithetical statements, if we may call them that, will be of great assistance to them.

You know that I am extremely anxious to do what I may be able to do to restore the good image of our Saint Louis faculty. I cannot, of course, do it without the kindness the faculty has always shown me and without getting the assistance from the faculty, which I believe is exceedingly necessary.

A brother said to me the other day that he feels the image of the faculty can be restored much faster by some positive statements such as are contained in the letter of the faculty under date of January 20 and by reenforcing such positive statements by a denial of the accusations which are falsely hurled at the faculty.

I thank you most heartily even now for the consideration you will give this request regardless of the outcome.

God be with you.

As ever,

Oliver R. Harms

Not only had Dr. Harms considered the faculty statement inadequate, but he had also suggested several doctrinal statements which he requested the faculty to confess to the church. To assist the faculty, he had actually drafted such statements and incorporated them into the faculty's January 20 correspondence!

The faculty's response of April 11, 1966, is highly revealing. Not only did the faculty fail to accept President Harms' proposed statements, but even demonstrated a reluctance to use such terms as "historical correctness" or "factuality" with reference to Biblical events. Their reply also reveals their difficulty with the question of errors in the Bible. Writing for the faculty, Dr. Fuerbringer stated:

By and large, neither the Sacred Scriptures nor the Lutheran symbolical books speak directly enough to some of the issues that your letter raises to enable our faculty to make the kind of statement that you desire without a great deal of careful reflection. Much of the discussion that is going on in our church-body and elsewhere in Christendom centers around the meaning of the terms like "factuality", "historical correctness", "error", "flesh"

and "evolution". I believe that it will unquestionably be possible to formulate a consensus among the members of the faculty on any of these issues and we propose to address ourselves to them. At the same time, this will not, in my opinion, take place within any time limit that would be of help to you in your present situation.

I am, however, happy to give you such reassurance as I can without going through this time-consuming process.

Every member of the faculty affirms that Christ rose bodily from the dead and that He invited St. Thomas to put his hand in the risen Lord's side. (St. John 20:27).

Every member of the faculty, as our letter to you declared, recognizes that as a tenet of the Apostles' Creed the resurrection of the body (or "flesh" - **carnis resurrectionem; Auferstehung des Fleisches**) is to be taught to and believed by Christians. We hold to the Athanasian Creed which affirms the Biblical doctrine in these words "at [Christ's] coming all men shall rise again with their bodies and shall give an account of their own works."

It is our conviction that no theologian speaking as theologian is competent to pass judgment on any particular theory of the modality of creation. But no member of the faculty denies that God created all things by His almighty power and no member of the faculty affirms any theory of the origin of the universe and everything in it that does not see all of creation as coming from the Creator.

No member of our faculty teaches that "the truth of the Bible is not truth"; and no member of our faculty denies the truthfulness of the Sacred Scriptures. We all subscribe to the statements of the Lutheran symbolical books which speaks of the "pure, infallible and unalterable Word of God" (Preface to the **Book of Concord**, ed. Tappert, p. 8). The God who addresses us in the Scriptures is the "God who never lies" (Tit. 1, 2). By way of illustration our symbols say, in connection with setting forth God's desire that we bring children to the font of baptism, "we know that God does not lie. My neighbor and I — in short, all men — may mislead (**feilen**) and deceive, but God's word cannot mislead (**kann nicht feilen**)." **(Large Catechism, Baptism, 57).**

Again with reference to the sinful concomitants of our fallen humanity as set forth in Galatians 5:19-20, the symbols remind us that we must "believe the Scriptures. They will not lie to you." **(Large Catechism, Sacrament of the Altar, 75-76).** No member of the faculty holds that the Bible contains error in the moral sense of the term.

I suppose that every contemporary Biblical scholar operates with the word "error", if only in such context as errors of transmission, errors of translation and the like. While the members of our faculty must and do use the word "error" in connection with what they say about the Sacred Scriptures, none of them will, even in a concise answer to a direct question or as a concession for the purpose of argument, allow the statement that "the Bible contains errors" to

stand without careful qualification and explanation. Some of the complexity of the issues involved appears from the article, "['What Does 'Inerrancy' Mean?'](#)" in the September 1965 issue of **Concordia Theological Monthly**.

I hope that these comments will be of further help to you in our common concern for promoting the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace in our beloved church body.

Cordially and fraternally yours,  
Alfred O. Fuerbringer

Even though the faculty at Concordia Seminary under the leadership of Dr. Fuerbringer declined to adopt the suggestions made to the faculty by President Harms, the latter continued to defend the Seminary faculty. In an editorial published in the July 3, 1966, edition of the **Lutheran Witness**, President Harms wrote:

We take the position that Adam and Eve were individual persons, historical characters. That is what Genesis says. That is what the Lutheran Confessions say.... Whatever literary form or mode the first chapters of Genesis may appear to be cast in, the Genesis account tells this historical truth. God created the world and everything in it in six days, according to Genesis 1—Let's make no mistake about it. Our doctrinal position on creation remains unchanged. Think of all the articles of faith involved in it: God, man, sin, redemption, faith in Christ, etc. We have not changed our doctrinal position.

Unfortunately, the record shows that there were faculty members at the Seminary who did not in fact agree with the Synod's doctrinal position concerning the historicity of Genesis 1-11 which had been so ably articulated by the Synod's president.

## **THE NEW YORK CONVENTION** [^](#)

As a prelude to the synodical convention of 1967 in New York, Dr. John W. Behnken, former President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, wrote a letter of concern on March 6, 1967, to the members of the Council of Presidents. He stated:

Enclosed you will please find a mimeographed copy of "SOME QUESTIONS CONCERNING SOME STATEMENTS OF GOD'S HOLY WORD."

After attending two meetings of the COUNCIL OF PRESIDENTS and the THEOLOGICAL FACULTIES I was troubled very much. I wrote down a number of questions and referred to the many passages of Holy Writ in which God gives His answers. Next I presented these to two good theologians of our Synod (not members of any faculties of our Seminaries or Colleges). These men urged me to proceed.

Dr. Behnken noted in his introduction that he, along with the Synod, was

eager to know the exact theological position of the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Some present day theologians hold that God's account of creation is not to be taken literally, factually or historically, but must be understood as a legend, a parable, a symbol, a myth, etc. Some other accounts in Scripture, even Books of Scripture, have been subjected to similar treatment.

Modern discoveries, advanced learning in the natural sciences, the "refinement" of the term "evolution" to "theistic evolution" etc. are given as reasons for this new approach to the accounts in God's holy Word.

Then there are those who hold that where the traditional and the new interpretations of Scripture are in conflict with each other we must grant the new interpretations equal rights, regard them as optional, mere alternatives, and hence permissible.

In view of the above I have a number of questions concerning some of the accounts which God has given in the Pentateuch. I am especially eager to know what position the present day theologians of my dear Alma Mater, Concordia Seminary, are taking. My earnest request and fervent plea is that I be given frank, conscientious answers on the basis of Scripture, God's holy Word.

Dr. Behnken's questions were never publicly answered by the faculty of Concordia Seminary. As a consequence of this and other unanswered concerns expressed by various officials of the Synod, uncertainty and suspicion concerning the faculty's doctrinal position were increased throughout the Synod.

## **DR. HARMS' NEW YORK REPORT** [^](#)

In his report to the Synod at the 1967 convention, Dr. Oliver Harms, synodical President, referred to the importance of doctrinal purity in the Synod.

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod has always placed a high priority on purity of doctrine and life. Our early history offers evidence of this fact. Our Constitution bears witness to it. The provisions of our Bylaws in many places demonstrate that we intend earnestly to carry out our commitment in this respect. Personally I announced my willingness to stand on this great tradition of our Synod in my acceptance speech in 1965.

However, Dr. Harms admitted that some members of the Synod were displeased with his doctrinal supervision.

There are those who contend that our efforts in supervising doctrine and life have not been very successful. I can agree with them to an extent, although I do not necessarily agree to the standards of success by which some may come to this conclusion.

Even so, he acknowledged that the doctrinal situation, which he called his

first area of concern, was at the critical stage:

We are confronted with a grave situation. At a time when peoples and nations are estranged from one another, we have permitted our own sacred bonds of fellowship ... to be strained and sundered. ... It may seem that I have devoted a disproportionate amount of my report to this first area of concern. It is basic to everything else we do. (1967 **Convention Proceedings**, pp. 45-46)

Although the New York convention passed several doctrinal resolutions and urged members of the Synod to "honor and uphold" these resolutions, doctrinal tensions in the Synod continued to mount, with many questions continuing to be raised about the teaching at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

## **FACULTY CHANGES AND THE HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD** [^](#)

Between 1964 and 1969, the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, took on a radically different appearance from its predecessor of ten years earlier, especially in the department of exegetical (Biblical) theology. These were the additions to the faculty in the five years prior to the Denver convention, as listed in the 1969 Seminary catalog:

<b>Name</b>	<b>Prep School</b>	<b>At Sem since</b>
Mark Bangert	Milwaukee	1966
Walter Bartling	Milwaukee	1968
John Constable	Bronxville	1964
John Damm	Bronxville	1966
David Deppe	St. Paul	1967
Arlis Ehlen	Fort Wayne	1968
Paul Goetting	Concordia, Mo.	1969
Carl Graesser, Jr.	Bronxville	1964
Everett Kalin	Bronxville	1966
Wi Jo Kang	Winfield	1968
Ralph Klein	Milwaukee	1968
Paul Lessmann	Milwaukee	1964
Duane Mehl	Winfield	1968
Robert Smith	Bronxville	1968
John Tietjen	Bronxville	1969
Carl Volz	St. Paul	1964
Robert Werberig	Bronxville	1965
Andrew Weyermann	Bronxville	1964

In the exegetical (Biblical) department, the new faculty men increasingly exposed students to the historical-critical method. For example, Dr. Everett Kalin stated (in a November 13, 1967, essay delivered at Webster College):

For we are seeing with increasing clarity today that the accounts about Jesus' words and activities as they are contained in the four gospels in the New Testament are in themselves the products of a



long development. ... In the process of their oral use in the community prior to the composition of the gospels, these materials were modified, reinterpreted, and rephrased many times.

In other words, a saying of Jesus as it is given in one of the gospels in the New Testament is the product of the church's tradition up to that time.

Another new professor, Dr. Robert Smith, wrote a review article the following year in which he redefined the Synod's traditional understanding of "inspiration" and "inerrancy." In that article, he also stated:

The "scholastics" [traditional Missouri Synod theologians] have taken the phrase "verbal inspiration" and "inerrancy" as their shibboleths. The "confessional" or "evangelical" group points out that these words should not be regarded as necessary. (**Lutheran Forum**, October, 1968, p. 3)

In opposition to the New Testament which ascribes to Moses quotations from the first five books of the Bible, Dr. Ralph Klein, a new Old Testament professor, echoed the liberal position that these books came from various sources designated as J, E, D, and P. Dr. Klein wrote:

Both P's emphasis on the uniqueness of man, his closeness to God, and J's stress on the creatureliness of man, his distance from God, are necessary to present an adequate picture of the place of man in creation. ([Concordia Theological Monthly, May, 1969](#), p. 127) [*sic*: p. 320]

Course descriptions in the Seminary catalogs also revealed changes that had taken place. For example, in 1964, a description of a course on I Peter reads as follows:

EN-545. **The First Epistle of Peter.** — This course consists of a study of I Peter on the basis of the original text, with a special view to its doctrinal content; specifically, the church, baptism, the descent into hell, and eschatology.

This 1964 course description stands in contrast to the description of the same course in the 1970 catalog.

EN-304. **I Peter.** Detailed literary-philological study of I Peter, with emphasis on the probable sources and its contribution to the Christian community's self-understanding.

The latter description shows a definite inclination toward the historical- critical approach which emphasizes such factors as "probable sources" and the "community's self-understanding." The introduction of historical- critical methodology was not a new development at the Seminary. Already in December, 1964, Dr. Richard Klann brought the concern to the faculty that some members of the faculty were questioning the validity of Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament. He stated:

The essay presented last fall by [an Old Testament professor] "For Faculty Discussion Only" is of considerable relevance. [He]

affirmed that working as an Old Testament exegete he "simply cannot discover any promise given to Adam" and that it is impossible for him to maintain that the Old Testament be interpreted in accordance with the Confessions.

As an indication of the Seminary administration's failure to deal successfully with such issues, it is noteworthy that six years later, in a 1970-71 course entitled "Old Testament Messianism," the same Old Testament professor lists as one of the objectives of the course, "A realization that the messianic theory presented in the Lutheran Confessions is not based on sound hermeneutical study of the Old Testament Scriptures."

An examination of articles and book reviews in the faculty journal (**Concordia Theological Monthly**) during this period also reveals the inroads made by the historical-critical method. Moreover, instead of the correction of doctrinal problems at Concordia Seminary, several professors (especially those called in the middle and late sixties) had become more open in their espousal of theological positions at variance with the official position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

## ELECTION OF DR. TIETJEN [^](#)

On May 19, 1969, — less than two months before the Synod's Denver convention — an event took place that was to have a profound effect on both the Synod and the Seminary. That event was the election of Dr. John Tietjen as Concordia's sixth president. Dr. Alfred O. Fuerbringer, President of Concordia Seminary since 1953, decided to retire before the synodical Bylaws required him to do so in order to enable the election of his successor prior to the Denver convention.<sup>1</sup> While Dr. Fuerbringer was still in office, the Rev. Dr. John Tietjen, Executive Secretary of the Department of Public Relations of the Lutheran Council in the USA (LCUSA), was called to be President of Concordia Seminary. The election was indeed unusual because it marked the first time in the Synod that a Seminary president was chosen while his predecessor was still in office.

Perhaps more significantly, the election of Dr. Tietjen failed to quiet the fears of many members of the Synod that there were in fact serious doctrinal problems at the Seminary that needed immediate attention. In fact, the election of Dr. Tietjen, rather than one of the more conservative candidates nominated by dozens of synodical congregations, was widely regarded as indicative of the attitude of the synodical administration toward such problems. However, the mood on the Seminary campus just

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<sup>1</sup> Synodical bylaws provide that college and seminary presidents are chosen by four electors from a slate of candidates nominated by members of the Synod and screened by a faculty committee. The four electors of Dr. Tietjen were the synodical president, Dr. Oliver Harms; the Missouri District president, Dr. Kurt Biel; the Concordia Seminary Board of Control (one vote); and the synodical Board for Higher Education (one vote). The term of office of President Harms and several members of the Board of Control were due to expire at the July convention.

prior to the Denver convention was one of great optimism. The expectation was that Dr. Tietjen's election marked the beginning of a new day in which the more liberal theological and ecumenical views of the St. Louis faculty would triumph in the Synod.

## II

### THE DEEPENING CRISIS, 1969-1973 [^](#)

As the time approached for the 1969 synodical convention in Denver, it was painfully clear that The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod was a deeply divided church body. The focus of concern was the question of establishing altar and pulpit fellowship with the more liberal American Lutheran Church (ALC), a proposal that had the support of both synodical President Oliver Harms and the Concordia Seminary faculty. However, large numbers of synodical pastors and laymen worried that such fellowship would further weaken the Synod's doctrinal position. To such persons, it appeared that the synodical administration had encouraged fellowship with the ALC while doing little or nothing to correct the doctrinal problems which existed at the St. Louis Seminary and which were becoming more pronounced in other parts of the Synod as well.

### ACTIONS AT DENVER [^](#)

Numerous overtures dealing with doctrinal matters, similar to those presented and dealt with at every synodical convention since 1959, were again submitted to the 1969 convention. In his opening address to the convention, synodical President Oliver Harms acknowledged these doctrinal concerns: "You know, as I do, that it is somewhat hazardous to venture a judgment concerning the state of health of the Synod, the condition of doctrine and life among us." (1969 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 47) However, in spite of Dr. Harms' best efforts to heal the doctrinal division, many in the Synod had concluded that a change in leadership was necessary in order to deal with the critical doctrinal unrest within the Synod.

Important resolutions were passed reaffirming the Synod's position concerning the Mosaic authorship of the Pentateuch and the authorship of the Book of Isaiah by the eighth century prophet Isaiah. In addition, the Synod added a new note of urgency and concern by calling for improved doctrinal discipline in order to preserve doctrinal unity within the Synod. To implement its concern for doctrinal supervision, the convention resolved:

Whereas, the President of the Synod has been entrusted with the responsibility of the doctrinal supervision of the Synod; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the Synod assembled in convention thank Almighty

God for His grace and mercy in granting our beloved Synod Scriptural doctrine and practice; and be it further

**Resolved,** That by the grace and mercy of God the Synod abide by its doctrinal position as stated in the constitution (Article II) and "uphold and honor the doctrinal content of the synodically adopted statements under the norms of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions" . . . and be it further

**Resolved,** That the provisions established by the Synod for disciplinary action and removal from office be evangelically followed and carried out; . . . and be it finally

**Resolved,** That all the members of the Synod be encouraged to support and cooperate with the President of the Synod and other officers responsible for doctrinal supervision in order that peace and unity be maintained. (Resolution 2-06, 1969 Convention Proceedings, pp. 85-86)

## ELECTION OF DR. PREUS [^](#)

The Synod's desire for stronger leadership in dealing with the Synod's doctrinal problems resulted in the election of Dr. Jacob A. O. Preus, President of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, Illinois, to the office of synodical President. The election of Dr. Preus, highly respected in the Synod for his conservative theological leadership at the Springfield Seminary, was widely regarded as a major setback for those who had been advocating more liberal positions within the Synod. Such persons were later to claim that the election of Dr. J.A.O. Preus as President of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod "by militant conservatives" at the Denver convention set in motion the "undoing" of the Missouri Synod.<sup>1</sup> However, it is clear that Dr. Preus' election came about as a result of the growing conviction that the doctrine taught at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, had shifted significantly away from the Scripture-based, doctrinal position of the Missouri Synod.

## THEOLOGICAL DIFFERENCES WITHIN THE FACULTY [^](#)

Concordia's new president, Dr. John Tietjen, attempted to pacify the Synod by issuing statements that indicated there was no doctrinal difficulty at Concordia Seminary. In the January, 1970 **Seminary Newsletter**, Dr. Tietjen reported, "Rumors of division are not true." Later in the year, President Tietjen in the November 24 **Lutheran Witness Reporter** went so far as to state that "neither the faculty nor I know of any basic theological differences within the faculty involving interpretation of Scripture or the meaning of confessional subscription."

Nevertheless, in spite of Dr. Tietjen's statements to the contrary, basic

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<sup>1</sup> This interpretation was alleged in a chronology prepared by Evangelical Lutherans in Mission (ELIM) in 1975 which received wide publicity throughout the Synod.

theological differences existed not only within the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, but also among various groups within the Synod. Already in Dr. Tietjen's first meeting with the faculty in September, 1969, various professors raised serious questions about certain theological emphases in an article published by Dr. Tietjen himself entitled "The Gospel and the Theological Task."<sup>2</sup> For that meeting, Dr. Martin Scharlemann had prepared a set of propositions or "animadversions" (as he called them) which pointed to major theological difficulties in the Tietjen article. Dr. Scharlemann's essay claimed that the Tietjen article "nowhere refers to the unique and very specific responsibility of Lutheran theologians to understand and apply the distinction between Law and Gospel," and concluded that the Tietjen article does not "flow from the central principle of Lutheran theology."

Differences within the St. Louis faculty and between the two Seminary faculties surfaced frequently during the meeting of the joint faculties with the Council of Presidents shortly after Thanksgiving, 1969. Essays by Dr. Robert Smith of the St. Louis faculty and Dr. Raymond Surburg of the Springfield faculty expressed sharply different evaluations of the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation. In both plenary and small group discussions, it became very clear that views expressed by some St. Louis professors were unacceptable to several of their colleagues at St. Louis, Springfield, and on the Council of Presidents.

The theological differences which had emerged at the Seminary were brought into sharp focus in January, 1970, when a St. Louis based group protesting the non-reappointment of Dr. Richard Jungkuntz as executive secretary of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations issued a document entitled "A Call to Openness and Trust." At least three professors from the St. Louis Seminary were authors and signers of this document, which stated:

The Gospel that is Christ is not a doctrine which equates Gospel with Bible — is basis for unity of the family of God. We specifically hold that differences concerning: (1) the manner of the creation of the universe by God, (2) the authorship and literary form of any books of the Bible, (3) the definition of the presence of Christ in the Lord's Supper, (4) the moral obligation of Christians in individual or corporate action, (5) the question of factual error in the Bible, and (6) the role and authority of clergy in the church are not to be the basis for inclusion or exclusion of people among the true disciples of Jesus Christ or membership in the Missouri Synod.

In the February 11, 1970 issue of "Brother to Brother," synodical President J.A.O. Preus addressed the issues created by "A Call to Openness and Trust."

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<sup>2</sup> John Tietjen, "[The Gospel and the Theological Task](#)," **Concordia Theological Monthly**, XL (June, July, August, 1969), 114-123.

They have ignored the existing synodical channels and procedures for voicing their concerns and have issued instead a statement in which they establish for themselves a highly dubious confessional stance, call for a new definition of the doctrine of the real presence of the body and blood of our Lord in the Sacrament of the Altar, with the concurrent practice of open communion, and attack our synodical stand regarding the inerrancy of Scriptures, a subject on which our synod has spoken clearly and repeatedly.

Make no mistake about this, brothers, what is at stake is not only inerrancy but the Gospel of Jesus Christ itself, the authority of Holy Scripture, the "**quia**" subscription to the Lutheran Confessions, and perhaps the very continued existence of Lutheranism as a confessional confessing movement in a Christian world.

"A Call to Openness and Trust" caused so much consternation in the Synod that at the request of the synodical President, the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) conducted a full scale review of the document's theology and issued an evaluation in April, 1970. Listed among the inadequacies of the document were:

1. The document fails to distinguish adequately between God's presence in judgment and His presence in grace.
2. The document does not observe the necessary limitations to freedom and diversity within a confessional church.
3. The document downgrades the importance of true Christian doctrine not only by its failure to distinguish between true and false doctrine, but especially by treating articles of faith as open questions.

In questioning various statements in the document, the CTCR concluded:

We therefore urge our brethren who have produced this document or identified with it to re-examine their position with a view to bringing it into harmony with the position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Although Seminary President John Tietjen was a member of the CTCR which adopted the "Evaluation," he publicly defended the participation of his faculty members in "A Call to Openness and Trust" (as, for example, before the Montana District convention in the Spring of 1970). Synodical President J.A.O. Preus wrote Dr. Tietjen requesting him to deal with the professors involved and to provide evidence that they continue to profess the doctrine of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions. His reply stated that the professors had been talked to and claimed that their doctrinal position was satisfactory.

Subsequently, at the Milwaukee synodical convention in July, 1971, the Synod resolved to "repudiate the inadequacies of 'A Call To Openness and Trust,'" admonished "all those who have disturbed the Synod by circularizing this document," and finally

**Resolved,** That the Synod ask those who are publicly identified with

this document to publicly assure the Synod through the office of the President of the Synod that they are faithful to the confessional stance of the Synod and repudiate the inadequacies pointed out by the CTCR.

(Resolution 2-50, 1971 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 128)

Although the vote on this resolution was very close (390-384) synodical officials were somewhat surprised that it passed at all, for during the debate Dr. Tietjen had shared statements from the professors with the convention, claiming that the matter had already been satisfactorily resolved. However, the resolution was addressed to others beside the Seminary professors and it called for a more specific retraction than had been offered to date.

The serious theological differences within the faculty at that time are further evidenced by a series of three inter-departmental discussions held between the Departments of Systematic and Exegetical Theology during the 1969-70 school year. President Tietjen attended the meeting on February 18, 1970, at which a three-page list of divergent theological opinions within the departments was under discussion.<sup>3</sup> He requested that the members of the departments keep their theological discussions confidential, because he claimed it would be “disastrous” if the topics under discussion got out into the church. Unfortunately, by the time of the last inter-departmental meeting held in April, 1970, no measurable progress had been made in resolving the doctrinal differences that surfaced in the previous meetings.

At the February, 1970 meeting of the Springfield and St. Louis faculties, Dr. Walter Bartling, professor of New Testament at the St. Louis Seminary, discussed his article on “Pauline Parenthesis” which had appeared in the CTCR’s widely distributed collection of essays entitled **Aspects of Biblical Hermeneutics**. Troubled by Dr. Bartling’s explanation of his essay, the Departments of Systematic Theology of the two seminaries met in February and again in March, and, with only two dissenting votes, adopted a resolution which stated that the Bartling essay “undermines the authority of the apostolic word, confuses Law and Gospel in the direction of antinomianism, and uses principles of the New Hermeneutics uncritically.” A copy of that resolution was sent to the CTCR of which Dr. Tietjen was a member. Although Dr. Tietjen later claimed that he had discussed the essay with Dr. Bartling, there was no public correction or withdrawal of the essay nor any public indication that the matter had been satisfactorily resolved.

Some members of the faculty personally called the theological differences to Dr. Tietjen’s attention and asked him to deal with the situation by

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<sup>3</sup> The document discussed at that meeting was entitled: “Preliminary Statement of Divergent Positions on Holy Scripture Held within the Departments of Exegetical and Systematic Theology.” Contained in the document were twelve contrasting theses which dealt with the following aspects of the doctrine of Scripture: inspiration, uniqueness, authority, source and norm, unity, Christ and Bible, inerrancy and infallibility, literary form and truth, on doing biblical theology, New Testament and Old Testament prophecy, New Testament and Old Testament interpretation, and Jesus and accommodation.



encouraging faculty discussions and other means. In a January 27, 1970 letter, for example, Dr. Robert Preus addressed his concern to Dr. Tietjen:

I do believe that the theological differences which have now for a long time been coming to light in our faculty and which are being discussed presently in our systematic-exegetical department meetings are far more than mere "differences of emphasis and approach" I believe there is a division among certain members of our faculty on some crucial points pertaining to the doctrine of Scripture.

In another instance Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, who had expressed his concerns to Dr. Tietjen both orally and in writing, commented concerning a small group meeting of faculty members held in the Spring of 1970 to discuss the Seminary's image:

The chairman of the Department of Exegetical Theology stated that one reason many people in the church failed to appreciate the [historical-critical] method is that the use of the method involves the recognition of serious contradictions within the Holy Scriptures.

He stated that every member of his department operated on the assumption that the Bible contained serious contradictions and that our exegetes could no longer employ the method of harmonizing the Biblical records. . . . His illustrations of alleged differences within the Bible made it clear that he was talking about major theological emphases rather than mere discrepancies in detail. (Excerpts from "Data on Theological Differences," p. 9, February 15, 1971)

Dr. Martin Scharlemann also made his concerns known to Dr. Tietjen concerning theological positions taken by several of his colleagues. In a March 12, 1970 meeting with Dr. Tietjen, Dr. Scharlemann pointed out serious theological irregularities that existed within the Exegetical Department. Dr. Tietjen stated he would give these concerns his immediate attention. After waiting in vain for nearly one month for this to happen, Dr. Scharlemann wrote synodical President J.A.O. Preus on April 9, 1970, requesting him to conduct an inquiry into the theological situation at the Seminary. He included in his letter a list of theological irregularities which had developed within the faculty. Dr. Scharlemann wrote:

For more than two years now my heart has been heavy with the feeling that some major accents of conservative Lutheranism were slowly being eroded in the theological climate prevailing at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. I have tried in various ways to call attention to and to resist these developments. The effects would seem to be rather negligible. . . .

May I be so presumptuous, therefore, as to suggest that a competent committee of inquiry be created to look into the

matters that threaten to deface the Lutheran character of the life and instruction going on at Concordia Seminary?<sup>4</sup>

A courtesy copy of this letter was sent to Dr. Tietjen.

As Dr. J.A.O. Preus considered Dr. Scharlemann's request, President Tietjen planned his own response. Within hours after he received the copy of Dr. Scharlemann's letter, Dr. Tietjen announced that a special faculty meeting would be held on the following Friday, April 16, even though a regular faculty meeting was scheduled for April 14. The agenda for the special meeting was not announced. No notice was given to Dr. Scharlemann or to the faculty that Dr. Scharlemann's letter to President Preus was to be the subject of discussion. In fact, Dr. Scharlemann was on a military assignment on April 16 (an excused absence as listed in "Faculty Notes") and therefore could not be present at the meeting, nor was he aware that his letter was to be the subject matter of the special meeting.

In the April 16, 1970 special faculty meeting, President Tietjen shared with the entire faculty the contents of Dr. Scharlemann's letter to President Preus. A resolution prepared in advance was distributed. After an emotional discussion (during which one senior faculty member burst into tears!), the faculty voted to censure Dr. Scharlemann. This action was taken in his absence and without any effort to speak to him personally or to hear his point of view. Adding insult to injury, President Tietjen sent Dr. Scharlemann a letter in which he accused him of insubordination for being absent without prior excuse and warned him that similar conduct in the future would warrant disciplinary action! Three faculty members registered their negative votes on the censure resolution because they felt that the conduct of President Tietjen and the faculty in that meeting manifested a serious failure to observe Christian ethical principles.

## THE FACT-FINDING INQUIRY [^](#)

As a result of these many factors the synodical President became convinced that in order to remedy the situation he would need to exercise his constitutional responsibilities in a direct fashion. Accordingly, he announced to the St. Louis Seminary Board of Control in a letter on April 20, 1970, that he had decided to appoint a Fact-Finding Committee. The document addressed to the Board reads in part as follows:

For several years, many in our fellowship have been disturbed by departures from our Synod's doctrinal position on the part of individuals serving in various capacities within our church. Individuals and boards continue to receive requests from individuals, congregations, conferences, and even entire Districts, to deal constructively with the situation. Although officials and boards have no doubt made sincere efforts through the years to

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<sup>4</sup> The complete text of this letter is included in this volume as Appendix A, pp. 151 ff.

remedy the situation, the problem seems to be increasing instead of decreasing.

Events in recent months have convinced me that my constitutional responsibility as President requires that I take decisive action on this matter. I consider such action necessary to help the members and institutions in Synod remain faithful to the Word of God and the Lutheran Confessions, to assist the Synod in the achievement of the purpose for which it was organized, and to protect the workers in institutions of the Synod from unfounded or unjust allegations.

In view of the responsibilities placed upon me and pursuant to the powers granted in the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod (see especially Article XI, B, 1-4; Bylaw 2.29b), I am appointing a Fact Finding Committee.

This Committee is directly responsible to the President of the Synod. Specific assignments will be given to the Committee only by the President, to whom the Committee will present its findings and recommendations.

The Board of Control was informed that the synodical President was directing the Committee to begin its work with Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, because of its strategic importance for the life and work of the Synod. He called upon the Board to ask the Seminary community to cooperate with the Committee in every possible way.

In early July, 1970, synodical President J.A.O. Preus met with Seminary officials to discuss the procedures for the inquiry at the Seminary. It was his intention at that time to begin the investigation in the fall. In the July 13, 1970, **St. Louis Globe-Democrat**, Dr. Preus explained:

I simply want to find out myself what the situation is. If the charges are not substantiated then those who are making them ought to cease and desist. If they are true, I will report them to the Board of Control of that school. I'm not making accusations, I'm just asking questions. I hope and pray we find everything to be in good order.

However, Concordia President John Tietjen vigorously denied the allegations that had been raised throughout the church for many years against the doctrine and teaching of the faculty of Concordia Seminary. In the July 14 Seminary news release (later reprinted in the summer, 1970 **Seminary Newsletter**) he voiced his displeasure with the impending investigation and criticized critics of the Seminary:

I regret that Dr. Preus has chosen to dignify the accusations against our Seminary by conducting an investigation... it is not Lutheran to expect uniformity in interpretation of Scripture passages or agreement on the nature and authority of Biblical texts. Many of our critics are quite frankly more fundamentalistic than Lutheran in their approach to the Bible.

In response to Dr. Tietjen's statement, faculty member Dr. Robert Preus wrote him on July 25, 1970 that our Lutheran Confessions do in fact require

uniformity in exegetical conclusions when doctrine is involved. Dr. Preus concluded:

Our Confessions, to which we subscribe unanimously, claim to be exegetical conclusions, . . . but as [your] statement reads it seems you are calling something "not Lutheran" which is soundly Lutheran.

In the **Seminary Newsletter** published in the summer of 1970, Dr. Tietjen stated: "In the year that I have been at the Seminary I have pursued every problem called to my attention and have personally investigated every doctrinal issue on our campus." While this statement gave the impression that Dr. Tietjen was exerting a great deal of personal initiative with regard to the theological problems at the Seminary, there is little evidence to support this claim. The theological differences enumerated at the interdepartmental meetings held during the 1969-1970 school year remained unresolved, and no further attempt to resolve them had been made since April, 1970. Dr. Tietjen gave no indication of dealing effectively with the three professors who were identified with signing "A Call to Openness and Trust" and with the faculty member whose essay had been criticized by the joint departments of systematic theology. A fact-finding inquiry might indeed prove embarrassing to the Seminary. It was therefore not altogether surprising — however regrettable — that Dr. Tietjen and other faculty members frequently sought to divert attention from the real purpose of the inquiry by alleging procedural irregularities.

The faculty interviews began December 11, 1970, and continued through March 6, 1971. Each professor was to be interviewed for a period of approximately two hours. The interview was to be tape recorded, with a transcript furnished to the President of the Seminary, the professor interviewed, and the members of the Committee. The President of the Seminary also recorded the interviews and furnished each professor with a tape recording. It was also agreed that each professor could bring along a friend or counsel if he so desired. Dr. Tietjen was present for each interview and each professor was given an opportunity to revise his tape-recorded transcript.

In questioning the mutually accepted guidelines of the fact-finding inquiry, the faculty of Concordia Seminary issued a resolution — not to the Board of Control but to the Synod! — in the January, 1971 **Seminary Newsletter**. Their resolution was also given ample coverage in a January 17, 1971 **Lutheran Witness Reporter** article entitled "Faculty Interviews Continue 'Under Protest.'" Stating that Dr. Preus' inquiry was putting "a cloud over everybody," Dr. Tietjen maintained, "Such a procedure is division-making and sets faculty member against faculty member." The faculty gave six reasons which they considered sufficient proof that the interviews were "intolerable." In condemning the interview process, they resolved that it was "unscriptural," "unethical," "divisive," "disruptive," and "detrimental." In an accompanying "Open Letter to President Preus," the

faculty declared: "[We] will continue to participate in further interviews of your Fact Finding Committee, but only under protest."

The faculty "Resolution" and "Open Letter" drew harsh criticism from the faculty minority and a member of the Board of Control. In a February 3, 1971 issue of the student publication **Spectrum** the faculty minority explained:

First of all, you should know that the "intolerable condition" advanced by the faculty majority as the reason for its action does not in fact exist — Second, there are two highly irregular aspects of the faculty majority's action. One of these is that their action was in response to a letter from President Preus to the Seminary's Board of Control — not the faculty. The faculty majority's response to the Board's letter was shared with the public press and the entire Synod before the Board even had a chance to read and react to the president's letter addressed to them.

After listing nine misrepresentations contained in the faculty majority "Resolution," the faculty minority insisted: "Our consciences, however, compel us to protest the wrong the faculty has done." They stated,

The faculty majority has wronged the President of Synod. It has done this not only by distorting the facts and by its slurs against him and his manner of conducting the investigation, but also by expressly calling his act unscriptural, unethical, divisive, and detrimental.

After insisting that the faculty majority had also wronged the Synod, one of its own members, and the Seminary itself — particularly the faculty, the faculty minority concluded:

We believe that Luther's Large Catechism is correct when it advises that public sin must be publicly rebuked. But in all this our prayer is that our words of rebuke will be instrumental in leading the faculty to reconsider its action, to apologize to those it has injured, and to correct the misinformation it has given the church. This would indeed be a first and major step toward the attainment of reconciliation and concord within the seminary and the Synod.

In the February 7, 1971 issue of the **Lutheran Witness Reporter** synodical Vice-president Edwin C. Weber, a member of the St. Louis Seminary Board of Control, responded to the faculty "Resolution" and the "Open Letter to Dr. Preus." He wrote,

1. The faculty resolution of Jan. 5, 1971 does not fairly present the ruling of the synodical president regarding the possibility of one professor criticizing the doctrinal position of another.
2. The resolution of the faculty accuses the president of the Synod of "asserting his right to ignore the Synod's bylaw 6.75."
3. The faculty resolution advocates principles of brotherly relationships and yet violates its own principles by condemning publicly the president of the Synod for imposing conditions that are "unscriptural", "unethical", "divisive", "disruptive".

4. The public release of the faculty resolution climaxes the failure of the seminary faculty and administration to cooperate with the Board of Control and the synodical president in respecting the confidential nature of the inquiry.
5. The open letter to the synodical president contains half-truths which mislead the reader and reflect adversely on President Preus.

Dr. Weber concluded, "It is deplorable that the faculty chose to accent the negative and keep from the church [the fact finding inquiry's] positive items."

As a consequence, three meetings were held in February and early March, 1971, involving the President of the Synod, his Fact Finding Committee, a special faculty committee, and the President and Vice-president of Academic Affairs of Concordia Seminary. As a result, additional guidelines were mutually agreed upon and were announced in the **Lutheran Witness Reporter**, March 21, 1971.<sup>5</sup>

On June 13, 1971, the Fact Finding Committee submitted its report to the synodical President, which included the hundreds of pages of transcripts of the interviews with professors, together with references to their writings. In addition, the Committee prepared summaries on each professor's interview as well as a general summary of all interviews. The next step was up to the synodical President and the rapidly approaching synodical convention.<sup>6</sup>

## MAJORITY "DECLARATION" AND MINORITY "EXPLANATION"

On November 3, 1970, the faculty issued a "Declaration" to the members of the Synod as their response to the impending investigation.

Because announcements about criticisms leveled against the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, could lead members of the Synod to doubt the faithfulness of the faculty to its confessional commitment . . . [therefore the faculty resolved] that we shall neither prepare nor accept a different or a new confession of our faith as the requirement for basic and permanent concord within the church.

Furthermore, the resolution of the faculty stated that any member of the faculty who could not subscribe to the "Declaration" was to put his disagreement in writing by the following day.

As a result of this action, five members of the faculty (Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, Dr. Richard Klann, Dr. Robert Preus, Dr. Martin Scharlemann, and Dr. Lorenz Wunderlich, hereafter referred to as "the faculty minority") sent a

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<sup>5</sup> These guidelines are included as Appendix B, pp. 155-156.

<sup>6</sup> For a more complete report on the fact finding inquiry, please see **Report of the Synodical President** ("Blue Book"), St. Louis: 1972, especially pp. 11-15.

joint "Explanation" to the faculty in care of Dr. Tietjen the next day, November 4, 1970. Their reasons for refusing to sign the faculty majority "Declaration" were two-fold:

1. They were concerned that the issuance of the "Declaration" might impede the investigation of the Seminary;
2. They were convinced that there were "basic theological differences" within the faculty including matters pertaining both to the interpretation of Holy Scripture and to the meaning of Confessional subscription in the Lutheran Church.

Dr. Tietjen released the faculty minority "Explanation" to the faculty by stating that it had "serious implications" for the faculty majority. He also released both documents to the press. In the November 24, 1970 **Lutheran Witness Reporter**, he added the remarkable statement that this was the first time he had been told of such "basic theological differences" within the faculty and that "neither the faculty nor I know of any basic theological differences within the faculty involving interpretation of Scripture or the meaning of confessional subscription." Before talking to the minority personally about their document, Dr. Tietjen took the matter to the Board of Control and publicly hinted that it might be necessary to deal with them under synodical Bylaws.

After the faculty minority at Concordia Seminary issued their "Explanation," Dr. Tietjen finally chose to deal with the professors according to synodical Bylaw 6.75 of the synodical **Handbook** which states that "controversies and disagreements among members of the faculty shall be submitted to the president of the institution for mediation." The minority insisted that they had not brought charges against their colleagues and their "Explanation" had reference to matters of public information, and that accordingly Bylaw 6.75 was not directly applicable. Moreover, they contended that it was impossible for Dr. Tietjen to mediate this major dispute because he had clearly aligned himself with one point of view by signing the faculty "Declaration." The faculty minority protested to the Board of Control:

If one acknowledges that Section 6.75 of the synodical **Handbook** applies to theological differences, it is readily apparent that a partisan president cannot hope to provide the kind of mediation specified there.<sup>7</sup>

The [January, 1971, issue of the Concordia Theological Monthly \(CTM\)](#) printed statements adopted by the faculty majority including the November 3 "Declaration," but it did not include the faculty minority "Explanation" or even indicate that there was any protest against the majority action — this in

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<sup>7</sup> Taken from the faculty minority document presented to the Board of Control entitled "Data on Theological Differences within the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis/" p. 18. An excerpt from this document is included in this volume as Appendix C, pp. 157-161.

spite of the fact that the "Explanation" was prepared in response to a faculty resolution which explicitly called for a **written** explanation from those who could not sign the majority statement. Moreover, when the faculty minority in a faculty meeting of February 9, 1971, requested that the "Explanation" be printed in the **Concordia Theological Monthly (CTM)**, the faculty defeated that resolution by a large majority, claiming that the faculty minority had not followed proper procedures for submitting a minority report. The members of the faculty minority protested that "a question of procedure (dubiously interpreted at that) has been given greater weight than the voice of conscience." As time went on, the faculty minority found it necessary to protest to the Board of Control Dr. Tietjen's handling of their case, as well as other actions involving the faculty majority. But the minority's basic contention remained unchanged: there were "basic theological differences" within the faculty calling for prompt remedial action on the part of the President and Board of Control.

## THE MILWAUKEE CONVENTION [^](#)

At the Milwaukee convention in July, 1971, there was considerable discussion within the floor committees and during the convention sessions concerning the constitutionality of the appointment of the Fact Finding Committee. The Synod responded by affirming the previous opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters which upheld the constitutionality of the Fact Finding Committee (see Resolution 5-26, 1971 **Convention Proceedings**, pp. 165-166). The convention also supported the judgment of President Preus in appointing the Committee, noting especially his "pastoral concern for doctrinal unity and purity." (Resolution 2-23, p. 120)

In a related action, it was agreed that the Board of Control should first have opportunity to review the report and to take action regarding the theological positions of the individual faculty members. Accordingly, the Synod adopted Resolution 2-28, which stated:

Whereas, the President of the Synod has submitted the report of the Fact Finding Committee to the Board of Control at Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri; and

Whereas, the Synod is desirous that a conclusion be brought about by the Holy Spirit under the Word of God; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the Synod direct the Board of Control to take appropriate action on the basis of the report, commending or correcting where necessary; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the Board of Control report progress directly to the President of the Synod and the Board for Higher Education; and be it finally

**Resolved**, That the President of the Synod report to the Synod on the progress of the Board of Control within one year. (Resolution 2-28, p. 122)



## THE PRESIDENTS REPORT AND “A STATEMENT” <sup>^</sup>

When the President of the Synod submitted the Fact Finding Committee report to the Board of Control in compliance with the synodical resolution, he, together with several Board members, requested that any Board interviews with professors be recorded in the interest of preventing misunderstanding and assuring fair documentation. However, the Board chose to decline this suggestion and instead resolved to invite the President of the Synod to attend any meeting in which it held interviews with faculty members.

The procedure adopted by the Board for dealing with the Fact Finding Committee report drew strong criticism within the Synod. For example, synodical Vice-president Dr. W. Harry Krieger described the procedure as being “akin to a fox guarding the hen house.” Nevertheless, despite the widespread criticism, the Board proceeded to conduct its own interviews, while largely ignoring the content and conclusions of the Fact Finding Committee report itself.

On March 3, 1972, Dr. J.A.O. Preus issued his **A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles** which he intended for use as guidelines by the Board of Control in identifying and dealing with theological and doctrinal issues in the hundreds of pages of interview transcripts. The six topics treated in **A Statement** reflected the major issues discussed in the committee's interviews with the professors. In each of these areas, **A Statement** presented a brief summary paragraph which stated the official position of the Synod, as well as a number of short statements expressing views which are not in harmony with that position. These antithetical statements included many of the specific issues discussed in the faculty interviews and, in several instances, reflected positions of faculty members suggested by their writings or interviews.

However, the Board of Control decided not to use **A Statement** except to receive it and to ask the faculty to respond to it. Moreover, the Board recognized Dr. Preus' **Statement** only “as guidelines to his assessment of the issues confronting our Synod and as to his understanding of how the issues should be resolved.” (Board Minutes, March 20, 1972, p. 4) Thus the Board did not equate **A Statement** with the official doctrinal position of the Synod and declined to use it as such. The Board preferred to handle matters in its own way.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>8</sup> Official actions of the Board of Control prior to the 1973 New Orleans convention were generally supportive of the faculty majority and Dr. Tietjen on critical doctrinal issues. Nevertheless, four of the eleven Board members frequently questioned or voted against Board actions on doctrinal and procedural issues and reminded fellow Board members of their responsibilities to the Synod.

## FACULTY “RESPONSE” [^](#)

The faculty majority “Response” to Dr. Preus’ **A Statement** was issued on April 4, 1972. It revealed that the faculty majority did not consider the positions rejected in **A Statement** to be descriptive of its teaching. The faculty also attacked the procedure of issuing **A Statement** as “improper.” Moreover, it declared that “**A Statement** has a spirit alien to Lutheran confessional theology,” that it makes “binding dogma out of mere theological opinion,” and that it was “inadequate theologically.”

In response to the faculty majority’s criticism of **A Statement**, the President of the Synod concluded:

The faculty **Response** amounted to what was regarded by many as a scathing denunciation of **A Statement**. At least the **Response** must be accepted at face value as an accurate reflection of the attitude of the faculty as such. This has grave implications. (**Report of the Synodical President**, p. 18)

On May 17, 1972, Dr. J.A.O. Preus met with the faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and presented five requests to the Seminary administration and faculty. They were:

1. That President Tietjen inform the synodical President of his own personal position on the controverted issues;
2. That the faculty members respond individually to the theses and antitheses in **A Statement**;
3. That extensive dialogue take place between the faculty majority and faculty minority in an effort to spell out areas of doctrinal and theological agreement and disagreement;
4. That a statement of the faculty’s position concerning the status of synodically adopted statements and resolutions be prepared; and
5. That there be complete frankness and clarity in expressing theological positions.

The synodical President emphasized that his requests were made in the interest of clarifying all the issues involved and of moving toward a resolution of them on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and in the spirit of Christian love.

However, only the faculty minority complied with the request of Dr. Preus for individual responses to **A Statement**. But the faculty majority, although indicating a willingness to discuss matters of mutual concern, declined the request of the synodical President.

## TIETJEN INSISTS ON HISTORICAL-CRITICAL METHOD [^](#)

One of the major incidents at Concordia Seminary in the early seventies was the case involving Dr. Arlis Ehlen, a professor of Old Testament theology, whose contract was not renewed by the Board after discussions

with him revealed difficulties with his doctrinal views, such as the doctrine of angels, the nature of the crossing of the Red Sea, and his insistence on the use of the historical-critical method.

In connection with Dr. Ehlen's case, President Preus wrote Dr. Tietjen on February 22, 1972:

In view of the action of the Board of Control at its meeting of February 19-21 regarding Doctor Ehlen, and under the responsibility placed upon me by Article XI of the Constitution, and in view of the fact that at the interview of December 20, 1971, in which Doctor Ehlen made it clear that he did not accept the facticity of some of the miraculous elements connected with the Exodus account — a matter which is certainly a doctrinal matter, involving the authority of Holy Scripture — I am herewith directing you to see to it that Doctor Ehlen teaches no course in which he will have opportunity to advocate his higher critical views concerning Biblical interpretation, effective at the beginning of the spring quarter of the 1971-72 school year.<sup>9</sup>

Dr. Tietjen declined to implement President Preus' directive. In explaining his decision to the student body in an official Seminary news release on March 6, 1972, Dr. Tietjen stated:

It would not be possible to operate a department of exegetical theology at a graduate school without the use of historical-critical methodology. ... It is not possible for [a professor] to teach any of

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<sup>9</sup> Unfortunately, space does not permit a complete report of the Ehlen case. However, the correspondence between President Preus and Dr. Tietjen illustrates many of the difficulties of this period.

Dr. Preus had concluded his February 22 letter to Dr. Tietjen with: "Please communicate with me relative to Dr. Ehlen's instructional assignments, so that I may be assured that you are complying with this directive."

Dr. Tietjen's response of February 25, 1972 was directed to the Board of Control, not to Dr. Preus. In declining to comply with Dr. Preus' directive concerning Dr. Ehlen, he wrote: "Since I am responsible and accountable to the Board of Control and since the board's policies and actions do not provide me with a basis for carrying out the directive in President Preus' letter, I am not able to respond to it or to take the action it calls for without further direction from the board."

Dr. Tietjen's response prompted a sharp reply from President Preus. In a March 2, 1972 letter to Dr. Tietjen, he wrote: "On the assumption that [your February 25 correspondence] constitutes a reply to my letter to you of February 22, I want to clarify the matter. While the title 'Executive Officer of the Board of Control' happens to be in the address, please be assured that this letter is directed to **you** by me, acting under Article XI of the Constitution of the Synod: 'The President has the supervision regarding the doctrine and administration of . . . all such as are employed by the Synod.' Both Doctor Ehlen and you are employees of the Synod." After stating that Dr. Tietjen had "obviously disregarded the specific and stated intent" of his letter, Dr. Preus concluded: "Again, I am asking you, out of love for God's Word and our church and its peace and progress, and because of the duties imposed on me under Article XI of the Constitution of the Synod, that you comply with this request and so inform me before the opening of the spring quarter March 6."

Dr. Tietjen's response to President Preus' directive came on March 6, 1972, the beginning of the spring quarter at the Seminary — not directly to Dr. Preus but to the assembled student body! A portion of this statement is printed above.

his assigned courses at a seminary level of instruction, thus taking the text of the Holy Scriptures with utter seriousness, without using historical-critical methodology. . . . Nor is that possible for any other faculty member who teaches a course in biblical interpretation, regardless of the department to which he may belong.

Four days later, Seminary professor Dr. Robert Preus protested Dr. Tietjen's statement. In the student publication, **Spectrum**, of March 10, 1972, he wrote:

When I joined this faculty the so-called historical-critical method was not employed but generally rejected by this faculty. A couple of exegetes might have advocated using certain aspects of it, but this was all. Now after fifteen years, during which the method has been quietly and gradually brought in, we are told that it is impossible to do exegesis at a seminary without using it.

I must respond that as a called teacher at Concordia Seminary, committed to the sacred Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, I cannot and will not use the historical-critical method as such for its false basic presuppositions and its false goals and conclusions. I have done this privately and publicly and in every possible forum, in joint faculty meetings and before the Council of Presidents, in my classes, in papers delivered throughout the Synod, in periodicals and books, and before our Board of Control. And I intend to do the same in the future in this school or anywhere else with the help of God.

## **BOARD OF CONTROL REPORT [^](#)**

On June 22, 1972, the Board of Control issued a "Progress Report of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary to the President of the Synod and to the Board for Higher Education," concerning its review of the Fact Finding Committee report on the Seminary faculty. It was the Board's conclusion that

In its careful review of the Fact Finding Committee report and in their interviews and discussions held with faculty members the Board to this date has found no false doctrine among the members of the seminary faculty. ... Rather, all the members of the faculty affirm a commitment to the doctrinal position of the Synod and hold that they are faithful to that commitment. (**Report of the Synodical President**, p. 138)

However, two members of the Board, Dr. E.C. Weber and Mr. Walter Dissen, vigorously contested the validity of the Board's evaluation of the Seminary faculty. In a minority report submitted to Dr. Preus and the Synod's Board for Higher Education in July, 1972, they insisted:

The foregoing interview with President Tietjen was the **ONLY INSTANCE** where the Board corporately considered the FFC transcript and summary and a response thereto . . . No substantive matters in the FFC report have been acted upon! . . .

These are **more** than mere theological details. They involve doctrine taught in the Holy Scriptures. Indeed, they involve the Gospel itself as well as confessional subscription. Consider this in light of the well publicized position of the faculty that it does not feel bound by doctrinal statements of Synod and it is understandable why the Synod's constituency is disturbed.

In view of all of this we cannot report in good conscience that there is no false doctrine. If we do not openly report this to the church we also become a party to approval of these aberrations. (**Report of the Synodical President**, pp. 139-142)

In addition, the synodical President questioned the Board of Control's procedure in dealing with the FFC report and individual professors. In replying to the Board action in a March 17, 1972 letter, Dr. Preus wrote:

The Board of Control also stands before the church with reference to the content of the Fact Finding Report. The action of certain board members is indeed puzzling to me, and I am sure will be also to the church. Think of the situation in which a member of the Board of Control could say in the meeting concerning [a member of the seminary faculty], "I would not have him teach my confirmation class," and yet before the evening is over, with no correction having been made in the theological stance of [the professor], the same board member speaks in favor of retaining him on the faculty to teach future pastors of the Synod. What response will the church make to such action?

## THE "BLUE BOOK" [^](#)

In view of the disagreement and confusion within the Board of Control, and as a part of his report to the Synod, the synodical President released a summary of the Fact Finding Committee report to the Synod in compliance with Milwaukee Resolution 2-28. On September 1, 1972, Dr. Preus issued the **Report of the Synodical President to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod** (the so-called "Blue Book"). Included in the report are transcripts of FFC interviews held with the Seminary professors, a brief history of the report, a summary of the findings, a conclusion by Dr. Preus, and various appendices. In "A Summary of the Findings," the Fact Finding Committee noted that, on the one hand, there was consensus on many of the great doctrines of Christianity. Yet, on the other hand, there were doctrinal problems at the Seminary.

However, the Fact Finding Committee did report a number of items which are a matter of grave concern to the Synod. The findings indicate a distressing amount of diversity in the theological positions of various members of the faculty. . . . Some of the positions are representative of the doctrinal stance of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Others represent significant departures from the position of the Synod. This fact alone is a matter of grave concern in a church body which from its inception has insisted on unity of doctrine and practice. (**Report of the Synodical President**, p.

21)

From the published testimony, it indeed appeared that many of the Seminary professors had departed from the official theological position of the Missouri Synod. Included in the evidence was documentation that some of the professors held or permitted:

1. A confusion on the doctrine of Scripture, especially its verbal inspiration and inerrancy, as well as disagreement on the relationship between the formal and material principles of Scripture.
2. A commitment to the use of the historical-critical method as a valid and preferred method for the interpretation of the Bible.
3. A possibility that many of the Old and New Testament stories are not really historical.
4. An acceptance that words attributed to Jesus in the Gospels were in fact never spoken by Him, but were later additions or interpretations made by the Christian community after the death of Jesus.
5. A reluctance to attribute Old Testament prophecies as pointing directly to Jesus Christ; that is, the minimalization of predictive prophecy in the Old Testament.
6. An insistence that Moses was not the author of the Pentateuch, Isaiah did not pen his entire book, and Paul may not have written all the books attributed to him in the New Testament. ("Summary of the Findings," **Report of the Synodical President**, pp. 21-25).

Thus, the Fact Finding Committee summarized:

The Synod must face the grave issue of fundamental disagreement in the doctrine of the Holy Scriptures with its far-reaching implications for all of Christian faith and theology. It is a matter of utmost urgency, demanding the Synod's most serious study, its clearest judgment, and its decisive and swift action under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. (**Report of the Synodical President**, p. 25)

Finally, Dr. J.A.O. Preus concluded:

Now we stand at the crossroads. Which way shall we go? The issues are before the church; the facts are in. On the one hand, we must preserve constitutional forms of church government, concern for the rights of individuals, and the desire that all things be done decently and in order. On the other hand, our doctrinal basis is at stake. We do not stand under the judgment of man, nor of one another. We stand under the judgment of Almighty God, who has given us His Word, who sees all things and judges all hearts.

The case now lies before the church. It is evident that the use of the historical-critical method has brought about changes both in our doctrinal stance, our certainty, and our attitudes toward doctrine. And unless things change at our Seminary, this trend will continue. It is becoming increasingly clear that we have two theologies. With the influential position the Seminary holds in the church, its views

will prevail unless the Synod directs otherwise and sees to it that its directives are implemented. (**Report of the Synodical President, p. 148**)

However, in spite of the serious nature of the findings and assertions of the Fact Finding Committee and of President Preus, the Board of Control made no official response to or use of the "Blue Book."

## **TIETJEN RESPONDS** [^](#)

On September 8, 1972, exactly one week after the "Blue Book" appeared, Dr. John Tietjen issued to the entire Synod a thirty-five page document entitled **Fact Finding or Fault Finding** (the so-called "Brown Book") which took issue with the entire Fact Finding Committee, its inquiry, and its report. Although the Board of Control had authorized Dr. Tietjen to prepare a response to the FFC report, the Board never saw the "Brown Book" prior to its release nor had it been informed by Dr. Tietjen as to the scope, content, or distribution of the faculty response.<sup>10</sup>

The "Brown Book" questioned whether the position of the faculty was accurately reflected by the report of the fact-finders. Consequently, a "Garbage In, Garbage Out" (Dr. Tietjen's actual wording!) attitude toward the FFC report was the major emphasis of the "Brown Book." For his part, Dr. Tietjen alleged that the fact-finders had consistently misrepresented

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<sup>10</sup> The text of the "Brown Book" makes it clear that it was prepared before Dr. Tietjen received the final report of the FFC. More importantly, the "Brown Book" frequently distorts the facts in order to discredit the inquiry. For example, in the Fact Finding Committee Report, it was stated:

### **Addendum**

#### **Kent State and Jackson State Memorial Service, May 4**

This service was written by Rev. Wayne Saffen. It was held in the Central Quadrangle of the Seminary. The service dealt with the problem of the Vietnam war and the peace movement, racism, etc. A definite political stance is evident. Is the use of the format of a divine service a proper and Lutheran vehicle for making propaganda and placing extremely judgmental statements in the mouths of the congregation?

One may also ask if the use of words and phrases such as "bastards," "goddam," "God, I'm dying for a smoke," is appropriate in an alleged divine service.

However, Dr. Tietjen, in **Fad Finding or Fault Finding**, wrote:

#### **h) Addendum: Kent State and Jackson State Memorial Service**

The president's Committee did not even do us the courtesy of finding out the "facts" on which it is supposedly reporting. It is reporting as fact what did not in fact occur. There was no "all night vigil." There was no service in "the Central Quadrangle." There was no joint worship. The announced event was cancelled. Why didn't the Committee find out what really happened? They would have had one less case against the seminary.

The facts of the matter are these: a memorial service was advertised on campus. It was to be held in the central quadrangle featuring joint worship with Fontbonne College (a Roman Catholic school). Such a service was in fact held employing a nine page Form written by a Missouri Synod pastor, Wayne Saffen. The service was held in a Loeber Hall lounge, rather than in the quadrangle as advertised. Dr. Tietjen was present at the service.

the stance of individual faculty members. Yet, for the first time, Dr. Tietjen himself acknowledged that doctrinal issues were involved in the dispute between the Synod and the Seminary. In his accompanying letter to the church, Dr. Tietjen went on the offensive:

There are, indeed, genuine doctrinal issues that must be confronted and resolved. ... We have grave misgivings about the doctrinal position of our adversaries, and we have some things to say to them about their doctrinal soundness.

To use his own term, Dr. Tietjen had labeled the synodical President, the individual members of the Fact Finding Committee, and, for that matter, the Synod in convention as "adversaries."

In **Fact Finding or Fault Finding**, Dr. Tietjen accused Dr. Preus and the members of the Fact Finding Committee of false doctrine, misrepresentation, and ignorance. For example, Dr. Tietjen wrote:

The views of Scripture interpretation which lie behind the investigation and shapes its result are less than scriptural.

The theology which lies behind the inquiry and the Report, by whose standard the theology of the faculty was measured, is unLutheran.

The theology underlying the Report of the president's Committee accounts for many of the distortions and misrepresentations of the position of our faculty in the Report. That theology threatens our Synod with grave danger.

The faculty's position on the Gospel, which is the position of the Lutheran Confessions, is so foreign to the President of Synod and his Committee that they have not even understood what the position of the faculty is and therefore have presented a basic distortion and misrepresentation of it in the Report. It is hardly appropriate for a Lutheran faculty to be interrogated and analyzed by means of a theology whose basic thrust is unLutheran.

Certainly charges of such a serious nature could not go unchallenged. In a December 14, 1972, letter addressed to the Board of Control, Dr. Edwin C. Weber, synodical Vice-president, urged the Board to instruct President Tietjen to retract publicly his charges of "sub-biblical" and "unLutheran" against President Preus and **A Statement**. Dr. Weber also requested that the faculty majority be invited to join in the retraction. Unfortunately, the Board determined to take no action on Dr. Weber's concern.

In a related action, the five synodical Vice-presidents on May 2, 1973, addressed a letter to the Board in which they objected to the judgment "sub-biblical and unLutheran" appearing in the document **Fact Finding or Fault Finding**. The five Vice-presidents requested:

that the seminary's Board of Control take pertinent action, without further delay, either exonerating the president of the Synod and formally retracting the charge, or submitting incontestable proof that the charge must stand.



Without the Board's knowledge or prior consent, Dr. Tietjen took it upon himself to answer this letter directed to the Board. He concluded his May 10, 1973, response to the Vice-presidents:

Since in spite of my statements you and President Preus continue to view the terms "less than Scriptural" and "unLutheran," which I applied to views of Scripture interpretation and theological understanding, as personal recrimination rather than as a contribution to defining the issues, I withdraw them.

The Board majority, however, defeated a motion expressing regret to the Vice-presidents that the Board was not given opportunity first to answer its own mail and to make known to the church Dr. Tietjen's withdrawal of his charges. Instead, the Board majority stated that Dr. Tietjen's response to the Vice-presidents was adequate.

## THE "FAITHFUL" DOCUMENTS [^](#)

Meanwhile, on September 21, 1972, the Council of Presidents (COP) involved itself in the growing controversy with a request to the faculty for a concise statement of its position on certain doctrines. The COP stated:

We encourage each of the professors of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to assure the church of his Biblical and confessional stance by setting forth (in writing), for use in discussion forums, what is believed, taught and confessed, giving special attention to the theological issues in controversy among us today such as Law and Gospel; Holy Scripture, its purpose, authority, infallibility, unity, and its interpretation; the relationship of the Gospel and Holy Scripture; the canonical text; Old Testament prophecy; and original sin; that we encourage these professors and the church to regard this exercise as an opportunity to edify the church.

However, instead of responding directly to the Council of Presidents, the faculty majority in January, 1973 sent their response to the pastors and congregations of the Synod in the form of a document entitled **Faithful to Our Calling—Faithful to Our Lord**. The material contained in the two-part document consists of (1) a joint faculty majority confession of faith, (2) personal confessions of faith from each professor, and (3) material to aid in the discussion of controversial issues.

It must be recalled that the synodical President had requested similar confessions of faith based on controversial issues nearly seven months prior to the issuance of the **Faithful** documents. The faculty majority, however, chose at that time to ignore Dr. Preus' request. More important, of course, was the theological content of the **Faithful** books. Acting on the request of District Presidents for an evaluation, the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) examined the joint faculty materials in the **Faithful** volumes. In a statement adopted in March, 1973, the CTCR found that the faculty had misrepresented the Synod's position on the relationship between Biblical inerrancy and saving faith, and that the

faculty's definitions of inspiration, inerrancy, and the Gospel-Scripture relationship were at variance with the Synod's position as described in earlier CTCR documents. The Commission then concluded:

It is for these reasons that we believe that the document is useful only to the extent that it points up the fact that there are substantive differences within our Synod on important doctrinal issues. If the purpose of the discussion forums being held throughout Synod is to promote unity through a truly Lutheran settlement of the issues in debate, then, in light of the foregoing statements, we believe that unless its serious inadequacies are pointed out, this document is not suitable for use in these forums.<sup>11</sup>

## BOARD DECISION AND SYNODICAL RESPONSE [^](#)

On January 15, 1973 (less than one week after the official release of the **Faithful** documents to the church), the Board of Control by majority vote determined to commend all faculty members "on the basis of the Fact Finding Committee report." Although the Board interviewed only twenty- nine of forty-four professors, it voted to "commend" (that is, a finding of no false doctrine) all forty-four Seminary professors. In at least nine instances there were four or five votes cast (out of a possible eleven) to "correct" (that is, a finding of false doctrine) the individual professor's doctrinal position. Moreover, in the Board minority report submitted to the synodical President, four Board members concluded that:

By clear and convincing evidence it is thus obvious to even the most casual observer that the doctrinal and theological concerns of the very President of the Synod were thus not adequately dealt with — if, indeed, dealt with at all.

To date the Board has entertained **none** of the foregoing complaints for jurisdiction. The board has never undertaken the **Report of the Synodical President. (1973 Convention Workbook, pp. 101-102)**

Board members Dr. Edwin C. Weber, First Vice-president of the Synod, and Mr. Walter Dissen, a Cleveland attorney, expressed their concerns:

The **only** question is whether The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod will judge the items of concern to be areas in which there may be latitude allowed in theological expression or whether the Synod will judge that the positions held by the faculty are actually unfaithful to Scripture and the Confessions and thus false doctrine.

**We believe the latter to be the case. (1973 Convention Workbook, p. 102)**

Dr. Herman C. Scherer, President of the Missouri District and a member of the Board of Control, has given his assessment of the method in which the Board of Control determined to "commend or to correct" the seminary professors. He told a congregational gathering:

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<sup>11</sup> For the complete text of the CTCR's evaluation, see Appendix D, 1973 **Convention Workbook**, pp. 39-40.

The Board of Control before New Orleans was prejudiced in behalf of the Seminary [pro-Tietjen]. The majority on the Board of Control at that time simply voted in favor of those professors because they were anti-Preus.

I can still remember where one individual [professor] had been interviewed. After he stepped out of the room, one member of the Board of Control said, "I wouldn't want that man to teach my confirmation class." And yet when the time came to vote whether he should be commended, this man voted to commend that professor. So you have a majority bloc prior to the New Orleans convention which voted together.

As a result no professor was found guilty of any false doctrine. It was my opinion at that time that there were some professors who were in need of correcting. However, because the Board of Control by majority vote said that all should be commended, the matter of false doctrine was dropped. (Comments made at Zion Lutheran Church, Ferguson, Missouri, October 19, 1976)

## PREPARATION FOR NEW ORLEANS [^](#)

The action of the Board of Control to commend all the St. Louis Seminary professors met with a strong reaction from various groups within the Synod, including sharp criticism by the synodical President. In his April 27, 1973 "Brother to Brother" letter, Dr. Preus noted that the doctrinal situation at the Seminary had reached an impasse. On the basis of the documentary evidence presented by the Fact Finding Committee, he believed that false doctrine was being promulgated at the Seminary with regard to the doctrine and authority of Holy Scripture. Yet the Board of Control reported that it found no false doctrine. According to Dr. Preus, there was only one way to resolve the matter. He wrote, "There can be no doubt that this issue ought to be resolved by the highest authority in the Synod, namely, the synodical convention itself. This can be done in New Orleans." In noting that the Board of Control was itself deeply divided in its decision, the synodical President maintained that it was necessary for the delegates to the New Orleans convention to be informed of all the facts pertaining to the doctrinal problems at the Seminary. Dr. Preus was amazed that the Board of Control could maintain that there were no charges of false doctrine against any faculty member who appeared before the Board. He continued:

It is also striking that the Board of Control "commended" as holding no false doctrine both the faculty majority and the faculty minority, despite the fact that the minority has charged that there are basic theological differences within the faculty and that false doctrine is involved.

Dr. Preus also had serious misgivings concerning the Board of Control's handling of the Fact Finding Committee report and their method of "commending or correcting." He explained:

Decisions to "commend or correct" were made on the basis of the Board members' recollection of the interviews and written resumes. No tape recordings or stenographic records of the interviews were made. All resolutions and requests from within the Board for maintaining precise records of the interviews were voted down and denied by the board majority. Moreover, the Board appointed Dr. Tietjen to write the resumes in collaboration with the interviewed professors.

The church also deserves to know that the Report of the Board of Control did not make any reference to any criterion as to what would constitute fidelity to the Holy Scriptures and to the Lutheran Confessions. It would appear that the board operated without references to any helps, such as formal statements of the doctrinal stance of the Synod.

In one of his strongest statements on the Seminary situation, Dr. Preus maintained:

It is the conviction of your president that we are not merely talking about minor **theological** differences, but that we are talking about matters that involve **false doctrine**. To erode the authority of God's Word is false doctrine.

Moreover, two members of the Board of Control, identified with the Board minority, issued a statement to President Preus which was printed in the **Convention Workbook**. In addition to citing various instances of alleged administrative irresponsibility, Board members Eugene Fincke and Charles Burmeister criticized the Seminary President for awarding honorary doctoral degrees to supportive Board members.

It should be remembered that, of eleven board members, five are laymen, one is a teacher, and five are pastors. Of the five pastors, four have been given honorary degrees by the faculty of the Seminary and three of those four received honorary degrees while in active service on the Board of Control. Men would be more than human **not** to be influenced by such favors from the faculty. ("Supplemental Report," 1973 **Convention Workbook**, p. 106)

Moreover, Mr. Fincke and Mr. Burmeister questioned the Board's handling of the faculty minority case. They wrote:

Concerning procrastination on certain major issues, charges of differences in "basic theology" and false doctrine have been brought by the faculty minority five. The board has had this item before it since 1971, but has yet to take definitive action. We are concerned that this matter may have been delicately delayed as it has, so as not to face the charges head on. These minority five are high in the esteem of the entire church.

Finally, the two lay members urged the convention to review the Board's decision to clear all professors of false doctrine.

We are deeply disturbed by the manner in which the board

reported to the church the results of its study. ... It is patent that the board has not resolved the matter, nor has it been able to really discharge its duty. Nor has the board given the church a **full report** of what it found. It is our conviction that the church must review this entire matter when it assembles in its convention.

### III

## THE NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION, 1973 [^](#)

The Synod in convention reaches its decisions largely by discussing and voting on resolutions presented by floor committees. The various floor committees (missions, higher education, evangelism, etc.) prepare their resolutions on the basis of suggested resolutions ("Overtures" or "Memorials") submitted by member congregations of the Synod.

For the New Orleans convention, in addition to the regular floor committees, Dr. Preus appointed a special committee to deal specifically with "Seminary issues" (Committee Three). In early June, 1973, Committee Three of the New Orleans convention met in St. Louis and held interviews with key individuals in preparation for its work at the convention proper. All the members of the Committee were cautioned by Dr. Preus that "it was essential for all the facts to be made known to the church in order that all parties might be as clear in their thinking as possible."

### THE WORK OF COMMITTEE THREE [^](#)

In preparation for interviews with all groups involved in the Seminary problem, the members of Committee Three were requested to examine various documents written by the faculty majority, the faculty "Response" to **A Statement**, the **Faithful** documents, and the voluminous Fact Finding Committee transcripts. In addition, the Committee spent long hours in session studying the Synod's doctrinal position and reviewing correct principles of Biblical interpretation. It also reviewed previous convention resolutions regarding doctrinal statements and gave considerable attention to the Seminary's accreditation.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Committee Three reviewed the voluminous documentation regarding the probation imposed on Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, by the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS). After the synodical Board for Higher Education (BHE) had declined to renew the contract of Dr. Arlis Ehlen, the AATS announced that it was appointing a Special Visiting Team to investigate matters at Concordia Seminary. After consultation with Dr. Tietjen, the Special Visiting Team recommended that Concordia Seminary be placed on probation.

After members of the Board of Control suggested that Dr. Tietjen prepare an appeal of the AATS decision, Dr. Tietjen wrote in the September 11, 1972 Board agenda: "In my judgment it is pointless and useless to appeal the action of the Commission on Accrediting," and thereby personally recommended that the Board resolve to see "no point in appealing the probation action since the board has no grounds for arguing against the reasons given for the action."

In July, 1972, President Preus appointed a Special Task Force on Accreditation to study matters relating to the Seminary probation. Subsequently, on October 3, 1972,

As a result of this extensive study, Committee Three was well prepared to begin its interviews with all parties involved in the Seminary problem. The five major parties interviewed by Committee Three in June, 1973, included: (1) members of the Board of Control, (2) the faculty advisory committee (representing the faculty majority), (3) the faculty minority, (4) Seminary students, and (5) Dr. Tietjen. Because of their special interest and importance to its work, Committee Three's interviews with the Board of Control and Dr. Tietjen merit special consideration.

Because Dr. Preus, in his April, 1973 "Brother to Brother" letter had criticized the Board of Control for its handling of the Fact Finding Committee report, Committee Three was especially interested in the Board's testimony. The Board had resolved that only its chairman, Rev. George Loose, should act as spokesman, although Board secretary Walter Disson could act as a resource person. In order to insure fair representation at the interview, both majority and minority Board members were present.

At the beginning of the Board interview, members of Committee Three requested that only voting members of the Board be allowed to remain. Since synodical Bylaws specify that the president of an institution is the executive officer of the Board and not a voting member, Dr. Tietjen was asked to leave. However, he complied only after offering the following protest:

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Dr. Tietjen reported to the Special Task Force: "The Seminary has not appealed because it believes the criticism of infringement on the rights and responsibilities of the Board of Control is a valid one. There is little reason to appeal when the facts support the reason cited for probation."

After reviewing AATS notations, the Special Task Force concluded, in a report prepared for Committee Three: "The recommendations of the Special AATS Visiting Committee and the actions of the Commission on Accrediting in placing Concordia Seminary on probation were based on a lack of information and on misinformation for which President John Tietjen must assume major if not exclusive responsibility; the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary has failed in its responsibility to properly protect the accreditation of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis."

Two members of the Seminary Board of Control voiced similar concerns to President Preus. They wrote: "There is also good reason to believe that the Board of Control should have actively explored the right it has to appeal the action of the American Association of Theological Schools in placing the seminary on probation. There is good reason to believe that the action of the AATS was unduly harsh and could still be successfully appealed. However, the Board of Control to date has taken no initiative in the matter. What, in our opinion, further clouds this action is the fact that a member of the Executive Committee of the AATS and the then vice- president of our seminary were one and the same person." (**Convention Workbook**, 1973, p. 106.)

Upon the recommendation of the Special Task Force on Accreditation and Committee Three, the 1973 synodical convention adopted new Bylaws, dealing with due legal process for the protection of faculty members. Among the new Bylaws was Bylaw 6.79, "Procedures for Exercising Board Supervision." This procedure was later followed in the case of Dr. Tietjen.

The probation of Concordia Seminary referred to above was removed in June, 1974, by the AATS Commission on Accrediting.

I challenge the legality of your action and I leave the meeting in protest. You have asked the Board of Control to be present as a Board in order to present information to you in response to your questions and that invitation must of necessity include me. And if you do not wish me to be present, I want you to know that you are making a wrong decision.

In answer to Dr. Tietjen's outburst and protest, the chairman of Committee Three explained the Committee's reasoning:

Dr. Tietjen, we felt that we wanted to talk to the voting members of the Board as a group because they are directly charged. If you would not have had another opportunity [for an interview] maybe we would have looked at it differently.

The Board's interview included questions concerning (1) the funding of the faculty's **Faithful** documents, (2) the rights of the Board minority, (3) Dr. Tietjen's charges of false doctrine against Dr. Preus, and (4) the commendation of all Seminary professors on the basis of the Fact Finding report. The following are excerpts of the interview conducted by Committee Three.

## Funding "Faithful" Documents [^](#)

In questioning the method of funding the "Faithful" documents, the Committee asked:

Now the documents, entitled **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord**, recently published and distributed to the church, without the permission of or consultation with the Board of Control. That is the allegation. Is that a fact or not?

Board chairman: There was knowledge, there was not approval. That was a faculty document.

Committee: What do you mean, not approved? Was the matter brought before the Board?

Board chairman: We were informed.

Committee: Were you asked to pay the bill?

Board chairman: The bill was paid through the administrative channels.

Committee: Did you authorize the approval of the bill?

Board chairman: No.

Committee: Do you know how much it was?

Board chairman: The document cost about \$12,000.

## Minority Report [^](#)

The questioning continued concerning the right of the minority to issue their report as a matter of conscience. The Committee asked:



The allegation is made that at the time that this matter was discussed, the two members of the Board indicated their intent for conscience reasons to issue a minority report to Synod regarding the doctrinal situation at the Seminary. The Seminary president told them openly among other things that, if they did this over his objection, he would question their competence to continue to serve on the Board. Is that a fact?

Board chairman: What is a fact is that I as chairman ruled that they did not have the privilege of a minority report.

Committee: We have already explained that. Did President Tietjen say what is reported here he said?

Board chairman: Would you repeat it?

Committee: I'll repeat it: That if they did this over his objection he would question their competence to continue to serve on the Board.

Board chairman: I don't remember that.

Committee: Does any member of the Board remember?

Board member: Yes, I remember that. It is a correct statement.

Committee: Does anyone want to disagree with that? (No response)

### **Charges Against Synodical President** [▲](#)

Concerning the charges of false doctrine made by the Seminary President against the synodical President, the Committee asked:

Would you consider the case of the Seminary president charging the President of the Synod with being sub-biblical and unLutheran as a charge that properly falls in the purview of [Board] policy?

Board chairman: No, because I think that would be a matter that would have to be handled outside of this because that involves the President of the Synod. That is my feeling. This is designed for internal use in the Seminary. The **Handbook** takes care of that.

Committee: All right, what has the Board done about that?

Board chairman: It has inquired about the situation and encouraged fraternal discussion between the President of the Synod and the President of the Seminary. This has been going on. This has been reported to us.

Committee: That allegation was disseminated publicly as I recall. What has the Board suggested be done about it?

Board chairman: We have urged the two people to get together and to settle their differences.

Committee: Has Dr. Tietjen been requested by your Board to retract that statement?

Board chairman: He has been urged to discuss it with Dr. Preus.

Committee: Has he been urged to retract it?

Board chairman: No, we have not taken any action because we are awaiting the results of the discussion between the two people involved.

Committee: Will it be contemplated by the Board that, if he retract it, he retract it in the same manner he formally made it, and that is publicly?

Board chairman: I couldn't say that. We will have to wait and see what the situation is then.

## Commendation of Professors [^](#)

Concerning the Board's commendation of all professors and their competence to judge theological matters, the Committee asked:

When you were conducting the faculty interviews as to whether to commend or correct, did you operate with a distinction between the two terms, theology and doctrine?

Board chairman: That distinction was mentioned from time to time. I think some members of the Board did and some didn't.

Committee: Some did and some did not?

Board chairman: Some members of the Board did not have the distinction clearly in their minds and didn't make it for some reason. Others did.

Committee: So there is no unified Board judgment on that matter, whether or not there is a difference or whether or not they are alike?

Board chairman: It has been discussed. However, I cannot say that the Board discussed the matter.

Committee: Well, then, I will ask this. The **Statement** has been called as before unLutheran and sub-biblical not only by Dr. Tietjen but by the faculty majority. Is this also the position of the Board?

Board chairman: No.

Committee: The Board has rendered no judgment on the **Statement**.

Board chairman: No judgment.

Committee: Relative to synodically adopted statements, "honor and uphold," did you find in your interviews with the faculty that their understanding of "honor and uphold" means something different than that which was adopted in Milwaukee and prior to that time?

Board chairman: That is really tough. I am not trying to dodge your question, but one would have to know what is meant by "honor and uphold" in the convention.

Committee: May I ask this? In your interviews did you ask the question, What do you understand by "honor and uphold"?

Board chairman: No, I don't recall that we asked that.

Committee: You never asked that question?

Board chairman: I'm just going to comment briefly. [That is] a very great concern of some of the members of the Board including myself.

Board member: At the very start, when the Fact Finding process was under discussion, we did insist that the basis for judgment was the Scriptures and the Confessions and not the synodically adopted statements.

## Basic Theological Differences [^](#)

Concerning "basic theological differences" within the faculty as charged by the faculty minority, the Committee asked:

Chairman Loose, I would like to ask you this question. Do you at this time recognize that there are two theologies operating on the campus?

Board chairman: I use the term theology in the original sense of the word, the way we talk about God, and I would say there are more than two theologies. I would say there are as many different theologies as there are men.

Committee: Do these theologies conflict one with another?

Board chairman: Not doctrinally.

Committee: We shouldn't get into this here, but you said a great deal there.

## INTERVIEW WITH DR. TIETJEN [^](#)

In its interview with Dr. Tietjen, Committee Three was primarily interested in (1) Dr. Tietjen's performance of his duties as President of Concordia Seminary, (2) his personal theological position, and (3) his doctrinal supervision of the faculty of Concordia Seminary. The Committee was aware of the numerous overtures to the synodical convention pertaining to Dr. Tietjen's conduct in office. According to synodical Bylaws, the President of Concordia Seminary is assigned the chief spiritual, academic and administrative responsibilities of the institution. Moreover, according to the Bylaws,

He shall supervise, direct, and administer the affairs of the institution in all its departments pursuant to the rules and regulations of the Synod and its boards and agencies, and the policies of the Board of Control.

He shall be the academic head of the faculty and preside at its meetings  
He shall periodically visit the classes of professors and

instructors, observe their efficiency and the execution of the prescribed curriculum, and in general secure conformity in teaching efficiency and subject matter to the standards and policies prescribed by the Synod through the Board for Higher Education. (Bylaw 6.91b, **Handbook**, p. 151)

Committee Three questioned Dr. Tietjen on matters concerning the doctrine expressed in the faculty's **Faithful** documents and his handling of various administrative problems. The following are excerpts of the interview conducted by Committee Three.

### **Tietjen's Doctrinal Position** [^](#)

Concerning his personal doctrinal position, the Committee asked:

You say in **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord**, "The Gospel gives the Scriptures their normative character and not vice versa." In a similar statement in Discussion Six, you say, "The Gospel is the norm and center of the Scriptures," that is page 28, top. All right, now the question: How does this agree with the Formula of Concord, Rule and Norm, 7, which reads, "The Holy Scripture remains the only judge, rule and norm according to which as the only touchstone all doctrines should be understood, judged as good or evil, right or wrong"?

Dr. Tietjen: Both statements are true. The statement of the Formula confirms that the Scriptures are judge, rule and norm. And the statements that you have quoted affirm the normative character of the Scriptures. They are in addition affirming that for Lutherans the key to understanding the Scripture and to accepting the normative character in Scriptures is the Gospel. That is to say, you do not understand the Scriptures unless you look at the Scriptures as that which proclaims Jesus Christ.

Committee: Well, then it should have read, "the Gospel is the key to the norm" rather than "Gospel is the norm."

Dr. Tietjen: It doesn't say that the Gospel is the norm, does it?

Committee: Yes, page 28, the top.

Dr. Tietjen: It [the Gospel] is the norm of the Scriptures, it is the norm and center of the Scriptures. The Scriptures are indeed the norm. It is not saying that the Scriptures are not the norm, but it is saying that if you wish to understand the Scriptures, the way to understand them is through the Gospel. There is no other way, as our Lord Himself affirmed, that it is the Scriptures which testify of Him. . . .

Committee: What is the norm for judging all doctrine and all teaching of the Scriptures?

Dr. Tietjen: The Holy Scriptures.

Committee: Not the Gospel?

Dr. Tietjen: The Holy Scriptures is the norm. If you want to know how to understand the Scriptures, then you have to have the Gospel to lead you to that understanding.

## **Historicity of Biblical Events**

Concerning the interpretation of historical events in the Scriptures, the Committee asked:

Do you believe that the [professors'] way of subscribing to the Confessions is that they allow themselves to interpret them according to their own understanding of the Scriptures?

Dr. Tietjen: It has been our position as a church that our confessional subscription is to the doctrinal content of the Confessions, not to their historical judgment, their world views, their particular exegetical interpretations, or their scientific understanding or anything like that.

Committee: I would suppose that most people in the Missouri Synod would find a grave source of inconsistency in that kind of use of Genesis, chapter 3, in view of what is in the Formula and Smalcald Articles, in identifying Adam and Eve distinctly in the fall as an historical event. Would you consider this a historical judgment?

Dr. Tietjen: The members of our faculty affirm the factuality of the fall and the creation and that is indeed the doctrine that is being taught in the Lutheran Confessions.

Committee: But that doesn't quite answer the question of the factuality and historicity of Adam and Eve and of that fall event, does it?

Dr. Tietjen: That is a question of interpretation that we have to ask, isn't it?

Committee: The question which is not the answer. . . .

Dr. Tietjen: The question that has to be asked is, What is that literature that is affirming the fact of the fall? Is it intended to be a literal, historical narrative or is it another kind of narrative?

## **Confrontation with Board Minority**

Concerning Dr. Tietjen's confrontation with Board minority members (which had already been discussed with Dr. Loose in the Board of Control's interview), the Committee asked:

Did you tell the [Board minority] members, who intended their minority report to be filed, that if they did this over your objection you would question their competence to serve on the Board?

Dr. Tietjen: We have had a great misunderstanding in this particular area. We went around on it again today before the Board. I

did make a statement to that effect, but not in connection with that particular report. ... It is perfectly legitimate for a group which dissents from an action of the Board to submit a minority report. However, it is my understanding, and I will be happy to stand corrected if I am wrong, that a minority report is in every case presented to the Board of which this group is a minority.

Committee: Except you are aware of the fact, aren't you, Dr. Tietjen, that the Board in question ruled that the minority report was out of order?

Dr. Tietjen: They [the Board minority] could perhaps share the information with the Board.

Committee: Did the Board in its official action rule them out of order?

Dr. Tietjen: This was in connection with a different report, though.

Committee: We were advised by the chairman of the Board that the minority report had been filed and had been ruled out of order by the Board of Control. Do you understand it differently?

Dr. Tietjen: The minority report was ruled out of order on the grounds that the report would be made through the President of the Synod at the direction of the synodical convention and on the basis of Robert's **Rules of Order**. The possibility of a minority report, the privilege, not a right, can be granted only by the group that asked for a report.

Committee: They denied that right and so these people took this avenue in submitting a minority report. Isn't that the fact?

Dr. Tietjen: That is my understanding.

## THE NEW ORLEANS CONVENTION [^](#)

The fiftieth regular convention of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod met in New Orleans, Louisiana, July 6-13, 1973. Understandably, the doctrinal issues confronting the Synod dominated discussion throughout the convention. In his report in the first session, Dr. J.A.O. Preus, synodical President, set the tone for the convention by emphasizing: "I want you to understand the gravity of the situation, affecting as it does not only all that you do in this convention but virtually all that we will do as a church body in years to come." He continued:

But it must also be said that my efforts to maintain our theological position have been called "divisive," and the position itself condemned as "less than scriptural," "un-Lutheran," "sub-biblical" and "alien to Lutheran theology," etc. These allegations from some of the most important leaders in our Synod have never been withdrawn, in spite of the fact that our Commission on Theology and Church Relations, our Springfield Seminary, the Board for Higher Education, several Districts and pastoral conferences, and literally thousands of pastors and laymen have

expressed their conviction to the contrary. I have said it elsewhere, and I say it to you now, that Synod stands at a doctrinal crossroads at this point in its history. For it cannot continue to profess one position on Holy Scripture, while tolerating attacks on that position from those who have another position. (1973 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 62)



Synodical President J.A.O. Preus addresses the 1973 New Orleans Convention.

### Resolution 3-01 [^](#)

Dr. Preus had challenged the Synod to reaffirm its historic position on Holy Scripture. After re-electing him its President by a resounding margin, the Synod turned its attention to the many overtures dealing with **A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles**. Before adopting its response to those overtures in Resolution 3-01, the Synod addressed itself to the status of synodically adopted doctrinal statements by reaffirming its traditional position "that such statements, insofar as they are in accord with the Scriptures and the pattern of doctrine set forth in the Lutheran Symbols, are, pursuant to Article II of Synod's constitution, binding on all members." (Resolution 2-12, 1973 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 115)

In its resolution concerning Dr. Preus' **A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles**, the convention was called upon to adopt a clear and concise doctrinal statement in accordance with the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions and consistent with the doctrinal resolutions and statements adopted in previous synodical conventions. The convention

was aware of the severe criticisms of **A Statement** from the Seminary faculty and their supporters throughout the Synod. But they were equally aware of the tremendous acceptance of the document by the thousands of laymen and pastors who had studied it during the previous year. During the convention discussion of the resolution, no opposition was expressed to its doctrinal content. Opponents of the resolution focused their attention on its constitutionality or on its possible misuse. When the vote was taken, the document which the St. Louis faculty had described as “having a spirit alien to Lutheran confessional theology” had been adopted as an official doctrinal statement by a 652-455 vote. The convention

**Resolved,** That The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod declare **A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles**, in all its parts, to be Scriptural and in accord with the Lutheran Confessions, and therefore a formulation which derives its authority from the Word of God and which expresses the Synod's position on current doctrinal issues. (Resolution 3-01, 1973 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 128)

After the adoption of Resolution 3-01, hundreds of delegates streamed to the podium to have the secretary record their negative votes while they and others sang the first stanza of “The Church's one foundation is Jesus Christ, her Lord.” This was the first of several well-planned and highly emotional demonstrations held in protest against convention resolutions.



Dr. Tietjen (partially hidden) files statement of protest with Secretary of Synod Herbert Mueller. Other protestors visible in the picture are (from the left) Dr. Robert Bertram, Seminary faculty member; Dr. George Loose, Chairman of the Seminary Board of Control (until July, 1973); and the Rev. Harold Hecht, who became President of the English District in 1974.



## Resolution 3-09 [^](#)

Having reasserted its right and duty to formulate and adopt doctrinal statements (Resolution 2-12), and having adopted **A Statement** as a "statement of belief" (Resolution 3-01), the Synod then gave careful consideration to the St. Louis Seminary's doctrinal position in Resolution 3-09. In preparing this major resolution, Committee Three had studied the voluminous Fact Finding Committee transcripts, as well as a number of public documents written by the faculty majority including **Fact Finding or Fault Finding**, the "Response" to **A Statement**, and the **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord** documents.

On the basis of this study, together with lengthy personal interviews of faculty members, it was the conclusion of Committee Three that the faculty majority's doctrinal position as expressed in its public documents was indeed in violation of Article II of the Synod's Constitution which states:

The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

1. The Scriptures of the Old and the New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;
2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

In Resolution 3-09, Committee Three offered the Synod a lengthy account of recent doctrinal difficulties involving the faculty. The resolution continues:

Whereas, "The Synod, and every member of the Synod, accepts without reservation:

"1. The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;

"2. All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God . . ." (Art. II); and

Whereas, The theological, doctrinal stance of the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has been shown to be in violation of Art. II of the Synod's Constitution, specifically on

1. the three points listed and explained above:
  - a. subversion of the authority of Scripture (formal principle);
  - b. "Gospelism" or "Gospel reductionism" whereby the authority of Scripture is reduced to its "Gospel" content;
  - c. denial of the third use of the Law, i.e., the function of the Law as guide for the Christian in his life;

2. the issues as described in the Fact Finding Committee's **Report of the Synodical President**, Sept. 1, 1972 (p. 25 and previously listed above); and

Whereas, the St. Louis faculty majority, with Dr. John Tietjen, in their several responses [**Fact Finding or Fault Finding?** (Sept. 8, 1972); "Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis" to Dr. Preus' **A Statement** (April 4, 1972); **Faithful To Our Calling, Faithful To Our Lord**, Parts I & II (Dec. 1972); "Response of the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to the 'Report of the Synodical President' " (May 22, 1973)], have refused to acknowledge as true any of the charges of false doctrine, thus any violation of Art. II of the Constitution; and

Whereas, Said documents provide written evidence of the deviations in doctrine as charged; and

Whereas, The synodical floor committee on seminary issues has met with President Tietjen and his advisory faculty committee and ascertained that there has been no retraction or change relative to the faculty's position; and

Whereas, The Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, has failed to recognize the validity of the charges contained in Pres. Preus' **Report** (Sept. 1, 1972) as based on the Fact Finding Committee's report; and

Whereas, It is in keeping with our Lutheran heritage, specifically our commitment to and under the Lutheran Confessions "that the opinion of the party in error cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended" (Formula of Concord, SD, Preface, 9); therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the Synod assert its continuing concern for "the conservation and promotion of the unity of the true faith" in accord with Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Confessions; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the Synod repudiate that attitude toward Holy Scripture, particularly as regards its authority and clarity, which reduces to theological opinion or exegetical questions matters which are in fact clearly taught in Scripture (e.g., facticity of miracle accounts and their details; historicity of Adam and Eve as real persons; the fall of Adam and Eve into sin as a real event, to which original sin and its imputation upon all succeeding generations of mankind must be traced; the historicity of every detail in the life of Jesus as recorded by the evangelists; predictive prophecies in the Old Testament which are in fact Messianic; the doctrine of angels; the Jonah accounts, etc.); and be it further

**Resolved**, That the Synod recognize that the matters referred to in the second resolved are in fact false doctrine running counter to the Holy Scriptures, the Lutheran Confessions, and the synodical stance and for that reason "cannot be tolerated in the church of God, much less be excused and defended" (FC, SD, Preface, 9); and be it finally

**Resolved,** That these matters be turned over to the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. (Resolution **3-09, 1973 Convention Proceedings, pp. 138-139**)

Because of the serious implications of this resolution, the standing rules of the convention were suspended in order to allow three members of the faculty majority to speak to the resolution. In addition, Dr. Tietjen was permitted equal time with Committee Three to respond to questions from the delegates.

In their presentation, the three faculty majority members stated that they did not regard the description of their position in the resolution as being accurate. Many delegates were perplexed by such statements of the faculty. For example, Dr. Edgar Krentz told the convention that no member of the faculty majority denied the historicity of Adam and Eve. However, many delegates were aware of the following comments made by a St. Louis faculty member at a Louisiana Pastoral Conference April 17-20, 1972:

I can't answer the question, "Do you believe in the historicity of Adam and Eve?" Historicity and facticity are not even in my dictionary.

One thing they caught most of us on is, were Adam and Eve historical persons? I don't know. I don't think so. It is not important. They caught most of us in some way on most of the points in Preus' "Statement."

I believe that many of my Christian brothers have problems with the virgin birth of Christ.

Don't ask me, "Do you believe in a 6 day creation?" ... I have problems with the virgin birth, real presence, bodily resurrection. ... I can't bear the burden of Scriptural infallibility.<sup>2</sup>

After weighing the evidence presented by the Committee against the testimony of the faculty majority, the convention passed Resolution 3-09 by a standing vote of 574 to 451.

### **Resolution 3-12** [^](#)

On July 11, Resolution 3-12, "To Take Action Regarding the President of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Mo.," appeared in **Today's Business**, the

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<sup>2</sup> Several pastors at the conference criticized the professor's remarks in a letter dated June 7, 1972, to the Board of Control. They wrote:

We the undersigned pastors of the greater New Orleans area, feel that statements of Dr. Walter Bartling of the St. Louis Seminary made at the Louisiana Pastoral Conference April 17-20, 1972 some of which are listed below, are un-Christian, loveless, vicious and an insult to the Sacred Scriptures.

It is hard to imagine that a brother in the Lutheran ministry would speak and conduct himself this way. We feel this brother must be dealt with in some way before he continues in any phase of the Lutheran ministry.

convention's agenda material. The Committee's resolution listed ten charges against Dr. Tietjen as President of Concordia Seminary in which he failed to exercise his assigned responsibilities. The resolution claimed that Dr. Tietjen:

1. Allowed and fostered the teaching and dissemination of doctrine contrary to the Scripture and the Synod's historic confessional stance;
2. Became a principal party and failed to mediate and settle professorial and doctrinal disagreements;
3. Was administratively irresponsible;
4. Presumptuously and wrongfully assumed Board of Control duties and prerogatives;
5. On occasion intimidated Board of Control members;
6. Demeaned the integrity and position of certain faculty members;
7. Demeaned the office of the synodical President and defied executive authority thereof;
8. Refused to cooperate with the synodical President particularly in doctrinal considerations;
9. Was insubordinate to the authority of the Board for Higher Education;
10. Failed to maintain careful watch over the spiritual welfare, personal life, and conduct of the student body. (Resolution 3-12, 1973 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 141)

In each instance, Committee Three had discussed these concerns with the parties involved, with Dr. Tietjen, and with members of the Board of Control. The resolution called for Dr. Tietjen's immediate resignation. However, if he should refuse to resign, the resolution authorized and empowered the President of the Synod to dismiss Dr. Tietjen from his office.

The members of Committee Three presented this matter to the Synod in convention for a decision in response to the numerous convention overtures regarding Dr. Tietjen's performance of his duties, and in keeping with the provisions of Article XI of the Synod's Constitution, which clearly establishes synodical supervision over its officers.

1. The officers of the Synod must assume only such rights as have been expressly conferred upon them by the Synod, and in everything pertaining to their rights and the performance of their duties they are responsible to the Synod.
2. The Synod at all times has the right to call its officers to account and, if circumstances require it, to remove them from office in accordance with Christian procedure. (**Handbook**, p. 19)

## Tietjen's Decision and Statement [^](#)

However, Dr. Tietjen did not resign from his office. Since a lack of time made it impossible for the convention to evaluate thoroughly the evidence against Dr. Tietjen, Committee Three thought it best not to present Resolution 3-12 for consideration and to offer another resolution, Resolution 3-12a, which would ask the Board of Control to deal with the matter.

As a result of convention elections, the complexion of the St. Louis Board of Control had been altered. The decisions of the pre-New Orleans Board had come under severe criticism in Resolution 3-10 (which appeared in **Today's Business** but was not acted on by the convention because of a lack of time). Resolution 3-10 states:

Whereas, The Board of Control has failed to carry out its responsibilities in protecting the doctrinal position of the Synod as is evident from its "commending" the entire faculty; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the Synod express its grave concern for the failure of the Board of Control to carry out its responsibilities; and be it further

**Resolved**, That the Synod call upon those board members who have supported President Tietjen and the faculty majority to repent; and be it finally

**Resolved**, That the Synod call on those board members who cannot in good conscience carry out their responsibilities under the synodical **Handbook** or who are unwilling to do so to resign. (Resolution 3-10, 1973 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 139)

In the hope that the "new" Board would be more responsive to Synod's directives and doctrinal position, the convention adopted Resolution 3-12a which turned Dr. Tietjen's case over to the Board of Control. The resolution reads:

Whereas, The committee is mindful of the fact that less than a day remains for convention deliberation and that the matters contained in the above named overtures (including 3-12) cannot be adequately dealt with on the floor of the convention, because of the press of other business and the time available; and

Whereas, Adequate procedures are available in the **Handbook** of Synod to deal with the matter; therefore be it

**Resolved**, That the matter of Dr. John H. Tietjen as president and professor of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, shall be dealt with in such manner as is permitted under applicable substantive and procedural provisions of the **Handbook** of the Synod. (Resolution 3- 12a, 1973 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 140)

In a dramatic response to the convention's action, Dr. John Tietjen addressed these words to the convention before leaving:

I should like to speak two words to the convention. Forgive me, one is a hard word. The second word is a good word. The hard word is this: I believe I have been grievously wronged by the convention and I should like to state a number of reasons why. The convention **Workbook** contains any number of overtures which ought not to have been included in that **Workbook** because they are unconstitutional in that there are provisions in the Constitution and bylaws for handling the concerns that were expressed in those overtures. Secondly, on Tuesday morning the chairman of Committee Three speaking for Committee Three together with President Preus gave me the opportunity of resigning from my office so that it might not be necessary for Resolution 3-12 to come to the floor and so that I might be spared the embarrassment of that resolution.

Brethren, I declined that opportunity on the grounds of conscience because the call that I have to my position as president of Concordia Seminary, I believe, is from God. Committee Three presented Resolution 3-12 with its grievous accusations to the members of this convention, to the delegates. It has been withdrawn or it was never before you, one of the two. You all know what it says. I have a copy in my hand, and it has been reported on all over the nation. In addition to that, good brothers, instead of reprimanding Committee Three for presenting that material to you rather than recognizing as they now do that adequate procedures are available in the **Handbook** of Synod to deal with the matter, you declined to apologize to me for all of those matters that have been publicly presented. I repeat, ladies and gentlemen of the convention, that I have been grievously wronged.

Now I should like to speak a good word to you. Even though I have been wronged, I forgive you. I forgive you because I think you really do not know what you are doing, and I think it is so that in time you will recognize what you are doing and you will grieve over this day. But more important, I forgive you because of the suffering and death of our Lord Jesus Christ and because His blood takes away all our wrongs. I want you to know that I hold no ill will against anyone at this convention, not against any delegates, not against any member of Committee Three, not against the president of the Synod. I pray upon you that God's love may surround you and that you may know His peace.

In stating that he had been "grievously wronged," Dr. Tietjen had in fact made a serious accusation against the convention. Moreover, in a convention beset with such well-planned public relations devices as protest demonstrations, black arm bands, and **ad hoc** communion celebrations by protestors outside the convention hall, Dr. Tietjen's objections against the public presentation of his case appeared to be inconsistent. Some observers also felt that his words of forgiveness, spoken without giving those he accused an opportunity to respond or repent, were at best inappropriate and at worst a confusion of Law and Gospel. However,



Dr. Tietjen delivers his final statement of accusation and forgiveness to the convention delegates.

many went home from the convention hoping that his words of forgiveness meant that he and his faculty would no longer accuse the Synod of wrongdoing, but would begin to resolve their differences with the Synod in a peaceful and fraternal manner. Unfortunately, that hope was short-lived.

## IV

### RESPONSE TO NEW ORLEANS [^](#)

The implications of the New Orleans convention resolutions were far-reaching. The faculty majority's doctrinal position had been declared contrary to Synod's doctrinal position as stated in Article II of Synod's Constitution, and "not to be tolerated in the church of God." The case against Dr. John Tietjen, as stated in Resolution 3-12, had been referred to the Board of Control for action. Moreover, the convention had elected two new Board members, the Rev. E.J. Otto and Mr. Alfred Briel. This new make-up of the Board indicated that the Board of Control's new majority was fully prepared to deal with the convention resolutions according to the Synod's historic doctrinal position. Even Dr. John Tietjen admitted that the outlook at the Seminary was serious. "I have no doubt it will not be long before I am no longer President of the Seminary," he stated. The man who had spoken words of forgiveness to the convention continued his relentless attack on the Synod's convention by stating, "The convention judged itself in judging us";<sup>1</sup> "In hearing they could not hear, and in seeing they could not understand."<sup>2</sup>

### FACULTY PROTEST [^](#)

The faculty majority, for its part, wasted little time in showing the Synod — and the secular world — how it would respond to the Synod's condemnation of its doctrinal position in Resolution 3-09. Instead of seeking a peaceful forum where its position could be clarified, explained, corrected, or even withdrawn, the faculty majority chose the way of organized public protest and demonstration. The most serious of these took place on July 24, 1973, barely one week after the New Orleans convention closed. On that day, without consulting or informing the Board of Control, the faculty majority responded to the Synod's action by protesting what it claimed was the misrepresentation of its position and the violation of evangelical discipline. In "A Declaration of Protest and Confession," the faculty majority protested:

1. The convention's judgment that we teach false doctrine which "cannot be tolerated in the church of God;" the evidence cited

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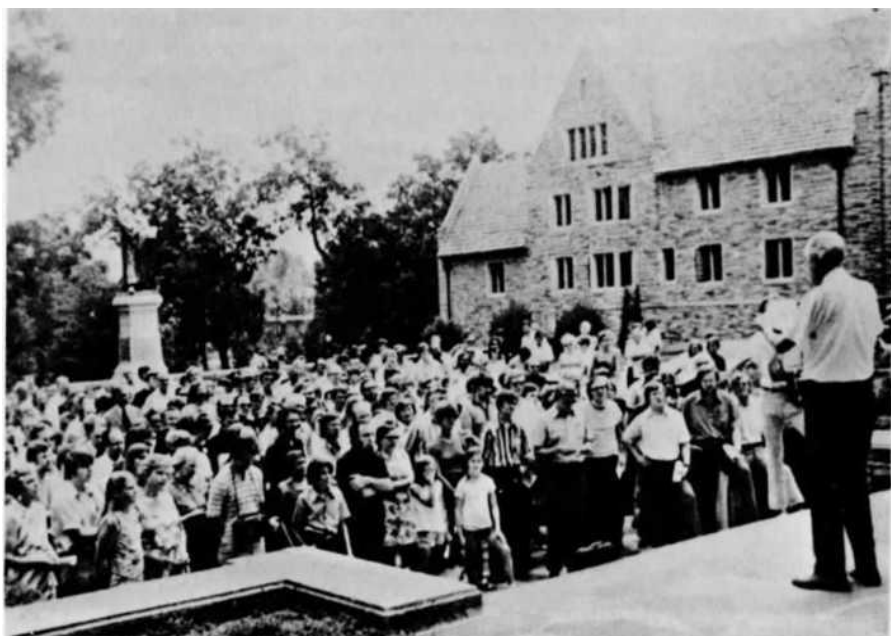
<sup>1</sup> Religious News Service release, July 13, 1973.

<sup>2</sup> **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**, July 15, 1973, p. 1.



- in support of the judgment misrepresents and distorts our teaching;
2. The convention's violation of the procedures for evangelical discipline clearly outlined in the Synod's constitution and bylaws;
  3. The convention's breach of contract in judging and condemning us by a doctrinal standard different from the doctrinal article of the Constitution (Article II);
  4. The convention's violation of the principle of **Sola Scriptura** (Scripture alone) in elevating tradition above Scripture;
  5. The convention's use of coercive power to establish the true doctrine of the Scriptures.<sup>3</sup>

The July 24 protest was conducted after the regular morning chapel service on the Seminary campus. The student and faculty demonstrators marched in procession to the base of the Luther statue. In full view of prearranged TV cameras and newspaper reporters, the protest document was read. It was later released to the entire Synod.



Faculty secretary Richard Caemmerer reads the faculty majority's July 24 protest document in a public demonstration.

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<sup>3</sup> Excerpts from "A Declaration of Protest and Confession," issued by the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on July 24, 1973. The entire document is included as Appendix "D" pp. 163f.

Committee Three at New Orleans not only had given the faculty majority adequate opportunity to respond to criticism, but had extensively documented its objections to the faculty's doctrinal position. The faculty majority, however, felt no such constraint to document its serious charges against the Synod. While disregarding the proper synodical channels for protest and dissent, the faculty majority preferred to use the public media as is vehicle for "discussion."

Moreover, the faculty's protest document called for the formation of an anti-synodical protest movement throughout the church body. Within a few weeks, a synodical protest movement was formed that called itself "Evangelical Lutherans in Mission" (ELIM). Not surprisingly, a number of faculty majority members figured prominently in the organization and leadership of this dissident group.

The method in which the faculty protests were staged both at the New Orleans convention and at the July 24 demonstration was severely criticized by individuals and agencies within the Synod. On the same day, Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, then executive secretary for the Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR), issued this statement on behalf of the synodical administration in an official synodical press release:

The faculty of the St. Louis Seminary continues to demonstrate its lack of sincere commitment to a course of action that will honestly confront and deal with the issues that divide our troubled church.

Instead of humbly listening to what the Synod has said to the Seminary and instead of seeking a forum that might aid in achieving reconciliation on the basis of the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, the faculty continues to misrepresent and defy the positions and actions of our Synod and its chosen leaders and to stage publicity-seeking events that only bring about further division.

We have no quarrel with an honest display of conviction and feeling to the world, but when black armbands are prepared before an event occurs and when the news media are invited to cover "demonstrations", then unfortunately one has to question the motives of such individuals and decry the great harm such actions bring to the church which has called them to be its servants.

The St. Louis Seminary Board of Control also expressed its displeasure in a September 17, 1973, resolution:

**Resolved,** That the Board report to the faculty and staff its dissatisfaction on the part of certain members of the faculty and staff in their "A Declaration of Protest and Confession."

On September 6, the faculty minority issued "An Appeal" to the Board of Control and synodical officials in which they strongly criticized the July 24 protest of the faculty majority. The five professors wrote:

We, the undersigned members of the faculty at Concordia Seminary, do hereby reject and repudiate the faculty's

"Declaration of Protest and Confession" (which was passed by an irregular meeting of the faculty members to which we were not even invited, and for which signatures were solicited from faculty members all over the country while we were not even informed of what was happening).

We consider this "Declaration of Protest" to be an act of rebellion and defiance against The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and its theology. The faculty protest not only seriously distorts the actions of the New Orleans convention, but challenges the very authority of a synodical convention to pass resolutions regarding the Seminary and the theology of our church body. . . .

Finally, we appeal to our colleagues on the faculty to repent of their misrepresentation and defiance of the Synod's actions and of their continued resistance to all evangelical admonition to accept the doctrinal position which our Synod has confessed on the basis of Holy Scripture and the Lutheran Symbols, and to submit to the Synod's judgment concerning the Seminary and its activities.

In a taped interview for KFUO, Dr. Martin Scharlemann, a member of the faculty minority, remarked:

In the first place, we prepared and published the "Appeal" to dissociate ourselves from the action known as "The Faculty Protest." That was put out as though it were an action of the faculty, when, in fact, it was not. Our "Appeal" was drawn up to say, in part, that we five of the so-called "minority" wanted no part of that action, especially since the "Protest" document invited people to engage in agitation throughout the church.

Secondly, we thought it was about time to start correcting a massive distortion that has been going on for the past few years. The faculty majority has been trying to make people believe that nothing seriously doctrinal was going on here at the Seminary. There have been repeated and consistent attempts to persuade people that the New Orleans action regarding the faculty majority made them the innocent victims of some great injustice.

In addition, the Board for Higher Education issued the following resolution in its September, 1973 meeting:

Therefore, the Board for Higher Education censors the action of the Saint Louis seminary president, Doctor John Tietjen, and the faculty and staff who signed the declaration of protest and confession. The Board for Higher Education calls on the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, to take note of this act of rebellion on the part of the president and the majority of the faculty and staff and to take forthwith appropriate action to deal with the stance that demonstrates complete unwillingness to cooperate with or respect the Synod.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup>The entire Board for Higher Education resolution is included in this volume as Appendix E, pp. 165f.

## THE AUGUST BOARD MEETING AND DR. TIETJEN [^](#)

In a special August 17-18 meeting, the newly constituted Seminary Board of Control responded promptly to the directives of the New Orleans convention to deal with the doctrinal position of the Seminary faculty and its president. As the first major action of the meeting, the new Board chose its officers. The Rev. E.J. Otto was elected Chairman; Dr. Edwin C. Weber, Vice-chairman; Mr. Walter Dissen, Secretary; and Mr. Charles Burmeister, Treasurer. At that point, Dr. Oliver Harms, immediate Past President of the Synod, was permitted to address the Board for more than an hour on his evaluation of the synodical crisis. After considerable discussion of Dr. Harms' concerns as well as those of others, the Board turned to the other items on its agenda. The agenda prepared on July 30 for the August meeting listed the following seven items:

1. To organize the Board for the next biennium.
2. To designate legal counsel of the Seminary and Board of Control and to designate instructions of legal counsel.
3. To consider the actions and recommendations of the New Orleans Convention of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod pertaining to Concordia Seminary, its officers and faculty, and take appropriate action.
4. To consider the protest of the St. Louis Seminary faculty regarding the said New Orleans Convention issued July 24, 1973 and take appropriate action.
5. To consider appealing the action of the Commission on Accrediting of the AATS in placing Concordia Seminary on probation and take appropriate action.
6. To consider matters pertaining to the new school year and take appropriate action.
7. To consider calling another special meeting of the Board of Control to deal with other matters that in the opinion of the Board require its attention.

In addition, Mr. Walter Dissen, Secretary of the Board of Control, had received a letter dated August 8 from Pastors Leonard Buelow of Green Bay, Wisconsin, and Harlan Harnapp of North Platte, Nebraska, in which they specified charges against Dr. Tietjen consonant with Resolution 3-09 of the New Orleans convention. These pastors had sent copies of their letter to Dr. Tietjen, President J.A.O. Preus, and the members of the Board of Control. Acting in his capacity as Secretary of the Board, Mr. Dissen responded to the pastors' letter by stating that the Board might be willing to give them time on the agenda of its special August 17-18 meeting to discuss personally the implications of their letter. Mr. Dissen's letter emphasized, however, that the Board itself would have to make that decision. He reasoned that the gravity of the New Orleans actions and of the pastors' charges against Dr. Tietjen made it essential for the special Board meeting to begin to deal with these issues as directly and personally as possible.

The pastors who brought charges against Dr. Tietjen had both served at the New Orleans convention on Committee Three, which concerned itself with the Seminary situation. Both men studied the evidence available to that Committee, heard the testimony submitted to that Committee by students, faculty members, and the pre-New Orleans Board of Control. In addition, they personally participated in the formulation of Resolution 3-09 which condemned the position of the faculty majority, and Resolution 3-12 and 3-12a which dealt with Dr. Tietjen. Troubled by the testimony they had read and heard in the meetings of Committee Three, and extremely disturbed by the faculty's protest action of July 24, they decided that the quickest way to deal with the situation was to bring their concerns about Dr. Tietjen to the attention of the Board.

Early in its August 17 meeting, after concluding its discussion of Dr. Harms' concerns, the Board of Control resolved to receive the charges of Pastors Buelow and Harnapp dated August 8, and to direct Dr. Tietjen to meet with the two pastors according to the provisions of synodical Bylaw 6.79a. They were to report back to the Board on the following morning.

Dr. Tietjen objected to the actions of the Board from the outset. He questioned the constitutionality of the New Orleans resolutions, the validity of the Board's action, and the probability of receiving a fair hearing before the new Board. After the convention, Dr. Tietjen attempted to build his case on his interpretation of synodical Bylaw 1.27c, which states that "defamatory allegations ... which may subject the President of the Synod or the Synod to civil action for libel or slander shall not be published or presented to any floor committee or to the convention." It was his contention that New Orleans Resolution 3-12 had violated this Bylaw.

However, synodical officials did not agree that the statements in question were either libelous or slanderous toward Dr. Tietjen. Moreover, they pointed to the Synod's Constitution, which provides in Article XI, 2: "The Synod at all times has a right to call its officers to account and as circumstances require it to remove them from office in accordance with Christian procedure." Both Resolution 3-12 (which was not officially presented to the convention) and Resolution 3-12a (which was adopted) were appropriate resolutions in view of this constitutional provision.

One thing was very clear: the Synod in Resolution 3-12a had directed the Board of Control to deal with Dr. Tietjen. To decline to do so would have constituted disobedience of the Synod's clear directive. Moreover, the Board recognized that it had a mandate from the synodical convention to deal with the problems that had plagued the Seminary and the Synod for so long. In receiving and adjudicating the charges of Pastors Buelow and Harnapp against Dr. Tietjen, the Board was obligated to follow the procedures for exercising discipline as outlined in synodical Bylaw 6.79. Among the provisions of this complicated Bylaw are the following:

1. Bylaw 6.79a requires the Board of Control to initiate a meeting between the individual faculty member and a complainant. If

the complainant desires to pursue the charges he must notify the Board of Control in writing and formulate his charges with reasonable definiteness and the evidence.

2. Bylaw 6.79b specifically involves the chairman of the Board of Control in the procedure when the charges are against the president of the institution.
3. Bylaw 6.79d states that if the charges are of sufficient gravity, the Board may temporarily suspend the faculty member from his teaching duties until the matter is resolved.<sup>5</sup>

At the meeting held the evening of August 17 between Dr. Tietjen and his accusers (in keeping with the provision of Bylaw 6.79a), Pastors Buelow and Harnapp centered their discussion on the charges which they had lodged against Dr. Tietjen on the basis of New Orleans Resolutions 3-09 and 3-12. However, Dr. Tietjen preferred to bypass a discussion of the issues in order to have extra time to gather his thoughts and his materials, as he put it.

As a result of this meeting with Dr. Tietjen, Pastors Buelow and Harnapp informed the Board of Control that they were unable to reach an amicable resolution of the matter. In their August 18 letter to the Board, they stated:

We would add, that our charges raised no new issues. Furthermore, Dr. Tietjen has reacted and responded to these issues either before Committee Three of the New Orleans convention of which we were members, or in public documents. Because of the seriousness of our charges and the issues raised and because of Dr. Tietjen's reactions and responses to the same, we wish to pursue this matter and we urge the Board of Control to act promptly in the best interest of the whole Synod.

After the Board received this statement from Pastors Buelow and Harnapp, the Chairman of the Board of Control, the Rev. E.J. Otto, declared a recess for the purpose of conducting a meeting with Dr. Tietjen and the complainants in compliance with Bylaw 6.79b. Dr. Tietjen again failed to confront the doctrinal charges which had been lodged against him. Following a forty-five minute meeting in Dr. Tietjen's office, Chairman Otto announced that his efforts as an arbiter had proved unsuccessful.

Thereupon, Dr. Edwin C. Weber, First Vice-president of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and a member of the Board, made this motion:

**Resolved,** That since our chairman has reported that parts a and b of 6.79 of Synod's bylaws have been a fruitless attempt, that the Board now under 6.79d suspend Dr. Tietjen from the office of president and professor of the Seminary immediately because of the gravity of the situation and the serious harm that can result to the Synod and the Seminary if the problem is not faced resolutely now.

<sup>5</sup>The complete text of Bylaw 6.79 is included in this volume as Appendix F, pp. 167 ff.

After numerous unsuccessful attempts at amendment and adjournment by the Board minority, the motion carried. In opposition to the Board action, President Tietjen said that he considered the action of the Board to be illegal and in violation of Bylaw 6.79. He stated that the Board did not have the authority to suspend him from his office as professor and president and that he was announcing his intention to continue to function as president and to exercise his responsibilities.

It was at this time that Dr. Tietjen's attorney, Mr. Richard Duesenberg, contacted the Board of Control's legal counsel, Mr. Philip Draheim, relative to the Board action. According to Mr. Duesenberg, the suspension of Dr. Tietjen was illegal, and he had advised President Tietjen accordingly. Mr. Duesenberg requested that there be no immediate suspension and stated that if the Board went ahead with its suspension, there might be a lawsuit filed in civil court Monday morning, August 20. Because of Dr. Tietjen's defiance of the Board's action and the threat of a lawsuit, the Board resolved to delay implementation of the suspension until it had received a legal opinion from its counsel as well as an opinion from the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM).

After the August 17-18 meeting, the Board of Control released the following statement:

In response to resolutions adopted by The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod in convention in New Orleans in July and in response to charges by two pastors, the Board passed two resolutions, the first of which suspended Dr. Tietjen as President of the Seminary, but the second delayed implementation until constitutional and legal opinions can be obtained with reference to the actions which have been taken under certain provisions of the Synod's bylaws. The effect of these resolutions is that Dr. Tietjen continues in his office as president of the Seminary.

## **ELIM IS FORMED [▲](#)**

As an outgrowth of the faculty protest of July 24, a so-called "Conference on Evangelical Lutheranism" was held near Chicago on August 28 with most of the faculty majority and Dr. Tietjen in attendance. At the various sessions, some of them chaired by Dr. Tietjen himself, the conference passed several resolutions which protested what it termed "errant actions" of the majority at the New Orleans convention and formed an organized "confessing movement" in opposition to the doctrinal position affirmed by The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod at the convention. Several speakers charged the synodical leadership with various offenses, frequently describing it as "legalistic" and "almost unchristian."

Although the conference failed to deal seriously with the doctrinal issues dividing the Synod or to substantiate charges against the Synod and its leadership, the organization's newly elected Board of Directors was authorized to implement immediately the bylaws of the new organization

(later to be called ELIM), to establish fund-raising machinery, and to establish a communications network.

The implications of the Chicago meeting of ELIM were serious, if not threatening, to the Missouri Synod. In the September 16, 1973, issue of **The Lutheran Witness**, synodical President J.A.O. Preus stated: "I must express my sorrow and disappointment over the action of a Conference on Evangelical Lutheranism which met last month at Des Plaines, Illinois." He expressed his willingness to meet personally with those who were sincere in their desire for reconciliation. He pointed out that the Synod had created specific channels for the expression and evaluation of dissent and stressed that the Synod's problems were primarily doctrinal. He criticized those who had taken part in the meeting for failing to confront the doctrinal differences that were dividing the Synod. Although he referred to the Des Plaines conference as a "rebellion," Dr. Preus pleaded: "I pray that we will soon stop this protesting of our official position, unite under the Holy Scriptures and our Lutheran Confessions, and get back to the task of proclaiming the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the world."

The Chicago ELIM conference gave evidence of a double standard of Christian ethics. The Board of Control was rightly expected to proceed according to synodical Bylaws; all charges had to be specific, documented, and thoroughly discussed; its actions were to be ethical, evangelical, and consistent with the provisions of Matthew 18. By way of contrast, however, leaders of the ELIM group, which included faculty majority members and the President of the Seminary, felt free to disregard Synod's Constitution and Bylaws, to bring charges and allegations against the Synod and its leadership without documentation or regard for evangelical fair play, and to use public newspapers, radio, and television to gain sympathy for their protest rather than the channels of dissent provided by the Synod.





## V

### THE YEAR OF CRISIS BEGINS [^](#)

How was it possible for over four hundred students to walk out of Concordia Seminary in February, 1974? Was the machinery which led to the strike in January and the walkout in February in evidence beforehand? From the evidence available, it seems that the student body as a whole, even as late as Dr. Tietjen's suspension in January, was largely unfamiliar with the Board of Control's extensive dealings with him. Yet, almost from the opening of the school year, student leaders voiced their strong support for Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority. In a letter dated September 24, 1973, just a few weeks after the school year began, the Student Administrative Council (SAC) addressed its concerns to the Board of Control:

Our reason for addressing you is the tremendous concern which we have for our president, John Tietjen. As students, we love him and respect him, and we are filled with sorrow at the prospect of his suspension and dismissal. Whatever it was which prompted people to publicly damage Dr. Tietjen's good name and to charge him with incompetence, is something which we do not share and something which we cannot condone. . . . [This] is sufficient reason for us to describe these public charges as loveless and un-Christian.<sup>1</sup>

The letter concluded by stating: "We want Dr. Tietjen to be able to continue his ministry here at the Seminary." The letter was signed individually by the members of the Student Administrative Council and by more than three hundred members of the student body, many of whom were new students who had been on campus less than three weeks!

The Board invited the SAC president to share his concerns with the Board at its September meeting. The SAC letter spoke of reconciliation, but with one significant qualification: that Dr. Tietjen remain as President of Concordia Seminary. The letter not only demonstrated the unanimous support of the student leadership for Dr. Tietjen, but implied that there might be a strong student reaction in the event of Dr. Tietjen's suspension.

### THE BOARD OF CONTROL'S SEPTEMBER MEETINGS [^](#)

The Board of Control held two meetings in the month of September: September 17 and September 29, 1973. At the September 17 meeting, the

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<sup>1</sup> This entire letter is included with the section "Student Documents," Appendix G, 1, pp. 171 ff.

Board dealt mainly with administrative matters. It also demonstrated that its handling of Dr. Tietjen's case was fair, evangelical, and in accordance with the procedures outlined in the Synod's Bylaws. Until a ruling from the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM) could be obtained as to the validity of the Board's procedure on the Tietjen case thus far, Dr. Tietjen continued in his office as President of the Seminary. The Board had presented its "statement of facts" on the handling of the Tietjen case to the CCM and had permitted Dr. Tietjen to include his suggestions (which he submitted after the mutually agreed upon date). In the meantime, the Board had no intention of taking any further action until it obtained a ruling from the CCM.

On the other hand, it appears that Dr. Tietjen was already convinced of what he later called "injustice" and "immorality." Several months later in the so-called "Evidence" which he released on January 21, 1974, at the time of his suspension, Dr. Tietjen asserted:

1. That the proceedings being conducted by the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, on the basis of bylaw 6.79 offer no possibility of a fair and impartial judgment;
2. That they are the result of collusion between the President of Synod, and six majority members of the Board of Control, and the two pastors who have preferred charges;
3. That they are a charade in which the two accusers and the majority members of the Board of Control are seeking to fulfill the letter of the bylaws for the purpose of reaching a predetermined objective already publicly announced by the president of Synod.

In January Dr. Tietjen asserted that the Board's actions were "unfair," a "charade," a "sham," "in conditions that can best be described as a kangaroo court," and the result of "a pre-determined objective." However, such assertions are totally absent from the "Statement of Facts" submitted to the CCM in early September. If Dr. Tietjen considered the action of the Board to have been "unchristian, unjust, and immoral" at its August meeting, it is difficult to understand not only why Dr. Tietjen chose to withhold his accusation from those he was accusing until his suspension in January, but also why he then preferred to present it to the student body (just before they were to vote on the moratorium proposal), as well as to the press at a news conference, rather than fraternally and personally confronting those he was accusing.

Two events of importance took place between the Board meetings of September 17 and September 29, 1973. On September 23, 1973, the installation service for synodical President J.A.O. Preus and other top synodical officials elected at the New Orleans convention was held at Holy Cross Lutheran Church, St. Louis. During the service, several professors from Concordia Seminary staged a demonstration in front of the church, in protest against the synodical administration. Robed in an academic gown,

Prof. Robert Werberig, a member of the faculty majority, carried a placard which read, "Not To Be Tolerated in the Church of God (3-09)." Other Seminary professors who took part in the demonstration were Norman Habel, Robert Bertram, Edward Schroeder, and Alfred von Rohr Sauer, plus some members of the Seminary student body. The protest was reminiscent of the staged protest demonstrations held at the New Orleans convention and the faculty protest of July 24, 1973, on the Seminary campus.



Profs. Robert Werberig (carrying picket sign) and Norman Habel protest installation of synodical officials at Holy Cross Church, St. Louis, on September 23, 1973.

The second important event was the September 25 release of the Commission on Constitutional Matters' opinion concerning the Board of Control's action in the case of Dr. Tietjen under synodical Bylaw 6.79. Contrary to some reports, the CCM opinion in principle upheld the validity of the Board of Control's actions at its August 17 and 18 meeting. In response to Dr. Tietjen's claim that he was unaware of the accusations against him, the CCM answered:

In view of the past history of accusations leveled against the faculty majority and against the president of the Seminary the substance of which was considered by the appropriate floor committee of the New Orleans convention, it can hardly be argued that Dr. John Tietjen was completely unaware of the accusations and therefore totally unable to prepare an answer to these charges. That some action of this nature was expected even by Dr. John Tietjen was publicly acknowledged by him and substantiated in a letter addressed to District Presidents by an attorney as his advisor.

However, the CCM added that "Dr. John Tietjen may not have had sufficient and reasonable opportunity to answer the charges against him and that reasonable time intervals may not have been provided between the procedural steps called for in Bylaw 6.79." Therefore, the Commission suggested and recommended that the Board revert to the first step of Bylaw 6.79a. In this connection, it should be noted that no time interval is specified for the initial procedural steps of this Bylaw. Moreover, since the Bylaw itself had just been extensively revised by the New Orleans convention (upon the recommendation of the Special Task Force on Accreditation), there was no table of experience to guide the Board or others in following the very complex procedures spelled out in the Bylaw.

The opinion of the CCM meant that the Board had dealt properly with Dr. Tietjen. Nevertheless, in the interest of "walking the extra mile," and because Dr. Tietjen claimed a lack of time, the CCM encouraged the Board to allow Dr. Tietjen to have additional time to answer the charges against him, if he were so inclined.

The Board met on September 29, 1973, in a special meeting, "to consider and to decide upon whether to implement the suspension of Dr. Tietjen as president of Concordia Seminary." After the Board had taken the CCM's "opinion concerning applicability of Bylaw 6.79" into account, they passed a motion which "strongly urges the foregoing parties (Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and Dr. Tietjen) to meet promptly and by October 15, 1973." (Board of Control Minutes, September 29, 1973)

The Board decided to give Dr. Tietjen ample time to gather his thoughts and to prepare adequate responses to the specific charges brought against him by Pastors Buelow and Harnapp.

Also of deep concern to the Board at this time was the apparent leak of information on Board actions, much of it of an executive nature, to the public press, radio and TV. Because of the serious nature of such violations of its confidentiality, the Board also resolved: "That for the present, Chairman Otto and Mr. Burmeister (as local contact) prepare news releases of this meeting for Synodical Director of Public Relations, Victor Bryant and **Lutheran Witness** Editor Martin Mueller."

Immediately following adjournment, Chairman Otto and local contact person Burmeister, with the help of the secretary's notes, prepared the materials for media release. Afterwards, Mr. Burmeister called Mr. Bryant at his home, asking him to intercept the material for professional editing and release it immediately in anticipation of the 10 PM television news and the midnight edition of the morning newspaper. When Mr. Bryant telephoned his regular professional media contacts approximately one and one-half hours later, he was told by most of them that "the Board meeting story had been received by phone more than an hour ago" and that he (Mr. Bryant) "was too late."

The month of October witnessed the formal organization of the moderate movement in Chicago known as "Evangelical Lutherans in Mission" (ELIM) and the initial publication of ELIM's paper, **Missouri in Perspective**.

From its beginning, ELIM has been a clergy-dominated movement with an elaborate administrative structure. Its well-organized communications network began full operation in October, 1973.<sup>2</sup> The original Board of Directors of ELIM included the Rev. Sam Roth, Dr. Martin Marty, the Rev. Raymond Schulze, Dr. F. Dean Lueking, and Dr. Alton F. Wedel, all critics of the synodical administration and the resolutions of the New Orleans convention. Also included as a Director of ELIM at that time was Dr. John Tietjen, President of Concordia Seminary.

In a letter dated September 25, 1973 and widely circulated throughout the Synod in October, the Board of Directors of ELIM issued the following manifesto:

We are in grave danger of sacrificing our evangelical heritage because of mistrust and because of a desire on the part of some for complete conformity in interpreting every detail of the Holy Scriptures. That misguided desire is rooted in the fear that without conformity we cannot have unity. It led the majority to pass resolutions at New Orleans binding consciences in a way contrary to our constitution and contrary to the nature of the Gospel.

Furthermore, the Synod took actions which virtually assure the suspension and expulsion — wrongly — of many of our gifted teachers of theology, and which call into question the orthodoxy of a large percentage of our pastors, teachers, and lay-members.

The suspension of Dr. John Tietjen from his office as president of the St. Louis Seminary (now delayed because of constitutional questions), coming barely three days after he was charged with false doctrine, is a vivid illustration of the crisis of legalism we face.

At least four other synodical school faculty members face a similar fate now, and more such actions are in the offing.

We cannot, simply because we detest controversy, sit back and do nothing, in the hope that it will all go away. Those who have been reluctant to speak out before will have to make their voice heard now.

On August 24, 1973, Dr. J.A.O. Preus had written to Dr. F. Dean Lueking and explained: "If you [Dr. Lueking] and a few of your associates are sincere in your desire for reconciliation, you are cordially invited to come to my office. Perhaps Bible study and fraternal discussion would be more in order

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<sup>2</sup> The Rev. Larry Neeb served as Editor of **Missouri in Perspective**, while continuing in his Seminary staff position as Director of Communications.

than a 'confessing movement!' ” In addition to those remarks reprinted in the September 16,1973, issue of **The Lutheran Witness**, Dr. Preus concluded:

It is equally clear that the Synod, in the interest of doing things decently and in order, has established these procedures for expressing and dealing with dissent so that the church is not disturbed by its members engaging in loveless public criticism or disparaging its official position.

## **FLUTE**

In September, it came to the attention of the Synod's Board of Directors that Dr. Tietjen had participated in incorporating an organization entitled "Fund for Lutheran Theological Education Inc." (FLUTE). Listed as incorporators in addition to Dr. Tietjen were three faculty members, namely, Dr. Robert Bertram, Dr. John Damm, and Dr. Edgar Krentz. According to the Articles of Incorporation on file with the Secretary of State of Missouri, the objects and purposes of FLUTE Inc. were:

1. to aid and assist in the development and promotion of scholarship and teaching in Lutheran theology;
2. to print, publish, purchase, sell, and otherwise disseminate literature related to the development of scholarship in and promotion of Lutheran Theology;
3. to assist pastors and teachers of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in the performance of their duties and the maintenance of their rights; and
4. to do and perform such other services and acts relating to the foregoing purposes as may be requested by the members and permitted under the General Not For Profit Corporation Law of the State of Missouri and any other appropriate statute of said state.

The Board of Control was puzzled by the failure of the incorporators to discuss their organization with the Board, particularly since its purposes explicitly pertained to theological education while failing to identify it with The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

In a September 26,1973 letter, the synodical Board of Directors directed the Board of Control:

to make inquiry and report to the Board of Directors the circumstances attending the organization and the structure, purpose, scope, and contemplated operations of the Fund for Lutheran Theological Education, Inc. and report to the Board of Directors the findings by November 1, 1973.

Since Dr. Tietjen was an incorporator of FLUTE and had not informed the Board of his prior action nor sought Board approval, the Board resolved to establish a special Board committee in order to comply with the synodical Board of Directors' resolution. The Board of Control committee's efforts

were largely unsuccessful due to the reluctance of FLUTE's incorporators or directors to provide adequate information on its aims and purposes. To this day, the precise nature of FLUTE and Dr. Tietjen's participation in that organization remain unclear and unresolved.

## FACULTY OUTREACH [^](#)

The faculty majority and Seminary administration were convinced that the time for protest action was at hand. With the ELIM communications network sufficiently organized and with strong support among the student leadership, the faculty majority organized a massive nationwide "outreach" to gain sympathy throughout the Synod.

During the week of October 21-29, fifteen professors, comprising approximately one-third of the faculty, left their classrooms at Concordia Seminary in order to participate in thirty-five meetings from coast to coast. This was done without the prior knowledge or consent of the Board of Control.

Although the stated purpose of these meetings was to inform laymen about the situation at the Seminary, in most cases they proved to be rallies designed to enlist support for the faculty majority. At a rally in Houston, Texas, Dr. William Danker warned:

If President Tietjen is dismissed, it will send shock waves around the Christian world. . . . [Dr. Tietjen] prayed with us before we left, saying, "Lord, give us not so much safety as boldness." (Houston Post, October 27, 1973)

In an October 26, 1973, presentation at Grand Rapids, Michigan, Dr. Robert Bertram made the following statement:

If what you have heard us say is that there never was a historical Adam, no first human individual who fell into sin and died; if that is what you heard us say, then we are sorry for that misimpression.

Dr. Bertram's statement was puzzling, to say the least, in view of what some of his colleagues had taught, for example:

The Adam language is typological language, and how necessary the historicity of Adam is to the validity of that typology I don't know. **(Report of the Synodical President, p. 93)**

That is right, [out of the mass of ape-like creatures running around] God picked two and called them Adam and Eve; he chose a segment of that earlier creation and made it into the human race, right. **(Report of the Synodical President, p. 94)**

Others in our Synod maintain that Genesis 2-3 is not an eye-witness report or a historical account similar to modern historical annals. They contend that the evidence within the text itself indicates that it is an ancient theological document which uses the narrative form. This text is more like a sermon than a news report.



Anthropomorphisms, symbols, and theological reflection are integral to the character of these chapters. Thus any effort to press the details of this narrative according to the yardstick of modern historians is not consistent with the intent of the passage. The writer of Genesis 2-3 is proclaiming the truth about Everyman (ha'adam, "the man") and every woman (Eve, "Mother of all that live"). (**Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord, Part I, p. 16**)

After the "outreach" rally at Cleveland, columnist George Plagenz wrote the following in the October 27 edition of the **Cleveland Press**:

The three profs [members of the faculty majority] gave the distinct impression that they believed in Adam and Eve and all the miracles of Jesus. If that is true, what is all the disagreement about? The professors indicated they believe all these Bible stories verbatim. They sounded to me as orthodox as their accusers. But still I couldn't be sure. Were they telling everything?

If the professors really are teaching that the Bible is not literally true on such pivotal issues as the creation of man and the miracles, it's about time we know that. Not that this would rule them out as good Missouri Synod Lutherans. But we ought to know. The professors ought to come right out and say it if that is their position and then defend it with all the vigor and honesty of sound Christian scholars — which they are. One often gets the impression they are avoiding giving straight answers.

The editorial by Mr. Plagenz focused on one of the major problems in the whole situation, namely, trying to determine exactly what the faculty majority did in fact teach. In Cleveland the professors gave the impression to some that they believed in a historical Adam and Eve and the historicity of all the miracles of Jesus. But in **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord, Part I**, and in the so-called "Evidence" released by Dr. Tietjen at the time of his suspension, as well as in other documents, these same issues became clouded and uncertain because these documents allow for both a symbolical and an historical interpretation of such Biblical events.<sup>3</sup> Whatever the motives may have been, the lack of "straight answers" from the faculty majority made it extremely difficult for the Board to deal with the underlying theological problems.

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<sup>3</sup> For example, in his "Evidence" released in January, 1974, Dr. Tietjen states: "The business about historicity is a similar problem. As you'll see from that little sermon I wrote, I affirm the historical character of the action of God in His work of redemption. But the Bible doesn't use the term historicity. It's a very interesting 20th century technical term. I don't think the Bible speaks clearly that Genesis 1-3, and that Jonah, and that Job are historical writings. I'm not thereby questioning the historical dimension in any of these writings. But I'm saying that I don't know that it's so clear that these writings are history." (section E, p. 13)

In the fall of 1973, while ELIM was busy organizing itself and setting up its communications network and the faculty majority was preparing for its outreach, the Board of Control together with Pastors Buelow and Harnapp continued to deal with Dr. Tietjen according to the provisions of Bylaw 6.79. To comply with the September 29 Board resolution, Dr. Tietjen met separately with the two parish pastors on October 10, 1973, in Dr. Tietjen's office. At the beginning of both meetings, Dr. Tietjen attempted to discover if there had been collusion between Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and some person or agency of the Synod in the filing of their charges on August 8, 1973. In response, both pastors independently stated that their only communication was with each other during the time in which they prepared the charges for presentation to the Board of Control.

After Dr. Tietjen's line of questioning revealed that there had been no collusion, the balance of the meetings was little more than a restatement of the charges contained in the August 8 letter to the Board of Control by Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and Dr. Tietjen's insistence that the charges were untrue. It was obvious that no progress had been made in resolving the issues.

Pastors Buelow and Harnapp reported in an October 11 letter to the Board of Control that the meetings with Dr. Tietjen had been fruitless. Nevertheless, they both agreed to meet again with Dr. Tietjen in their continued efforts to reach a peaceful and amicable solution to the matter and to answer certain questions that Dr. Tietjen himself had raised. The meeting would be held toward the end of October. In their letter, both men stated:

At the conclusion of our discussion Dr. Tietjen asked each of us whether we were satisfied with his responses to our charges. Each of us stated that we were not satisfied. Dr. Tietjen gave each of us a set of questions which he would like us to consider in further discussions.

We agreed that we wanted time to study his questions and to listen again to the tapes [of the October 10 meetings]. This we intended to do promptly. After we have had an opportunity to review Dr. Tietjen's responses to our charges, we will decide whether we wish to pursue this matter. We shall inform the Board of our decision as soon as possible.

The Board of Control concurred with the wishes of Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and awaited the outcome of their late October meeting.

A great degree of pressure was applied to the two pastors between the October 10 and the late October meetings with Dr. Tietjen. For example, an October 22 **Missouri in Perspective (MIP)** editorial concluded:

Many observers feel that the Board's present procedure amounts

to little more than a “kangaroo court” and suggest that the Board majority will carry out Dr. Preus's mandate that “Tietjen must go” regardless of the facts or the principles of Christian ethics. The judgment is already in, the Board majority already voted to suspend without hearing all the evidence. And now the Board will make a “show of right” in walking through the same procedure a little more slowly.

The matter of brotherly love, fair play, and justice are also a requisite for the members and boards of our Synod.

On the one hand, the **MIP** editorial could demand fair play from all agencies of the Synod and urge Pastors Buelow and Harnapp to conduct themselves in an evangelical manner in accordance with the provisions of the synodical Bylaws. On the other hand, the editors of **MIP** had no ethical difficulty in making unsubstantiated public accusations against brethren who out of concern for their church had acted in an ethical and Christian way according to the provisions of Synod's Constitution and Bylaws. Moreover, between the first meeting between Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and Dr. Tietjen on October 10 and their second meeting on October 26, plans for the faculty outreach of October 21-29 were being finalized. This outreach, held under the auspices of Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority, appeared to be an attempt to muster popular support for Dr. Tietjen at the very time the two pastors and the Board of Control were attempting in good faith to follow the procedures of the Bylaws with the hope of resolving the issues. To some observers, it appeared that Dr. Tietjen and his supporters were not applying to themselves the same ethical standards they expected in others.

## VI

### THE TENSION HEIGHTENS [^](#)

In some respects, the 1973-1974 school year at Concordia Seminary seemed to be much like any other school year. Lectures were given, field work was carried out in the churches and institutions of the St. Louis area, and tests and term papers were still a part of the academic life. True, in chapel sermons, class discussions, and informal conversations, frequent reference was made to the Seminary's problems. But for many students and others, the first few months of the school year had been relatively calm. However, events at the Seminary and in the Synod during November and December signalled that the tensions were heightening.

One source of irritation to many, including several Board members, was the appearances of Dr. Tietjen at several rallies at the end of October, just after his meetings with the two pastors. After a team of faculty majority members had visited Cleveland on their so-called "Outreach," Dr. Tietjen arrived to speak at several rallies held in the Cleveland area over the Reformation weekend. An October 27, 1973, **Cleveland Press** article cited Dr. Tietjen as "the chief protagonist" in the top religious news story of 1973. At a rally held on October 28, 1973, and reported in the October 29, 1973 **Cleveland Press**, Dr. Tietjen accused the leadership of the Missouri Synod of "distortion and slander." He also said: "It simply is not true that the Concordia faculty is teaching false doctrine. Some of the distortion of the Seminary's position has to be deliberate on the part of our opponents." Although Dr. Tietjen noted that his continued presence at the Seminary was "a hopeful sign, [since] there is always the possibility that my accusers will suddenly realize they are mistaken," he defended his continued presence at rallies around the country by stating that "public pressure is a significant factor in the life of an organization." Dr. Tietjen's public comments and the faculty outreach had made it very clear that "public pressure" was to remain a dominant feature of the Tietjen presidency.

Meanwhile, on November 13, 1973, Pastors Buelow and Harnapp sent the Board of Control a letter in which they stated that nothing of substance had been achieved in their most recent discussions with Dr. Tietjen. Since they were not satisfied with his responses, they expressed their intention to pursue the matter in compliance with Bylaw 6.79b, and stated that their "evidence shows that Dr. Tietjen has failed as the spiritual, academic, and administrative head of Concordia Seminary." Included with their letter were twenty pages containing their charges and supporting evidence

against Dr. Tietjen. According to materials later released by Dr. Tietjen, the basic charges were as follows:

1. We, as members of Synod, formally charge Dr. John H. Tietjen with holding and defending, allowing and fostering false doctrine contrary to Article II of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Dr. Tietjen writes and speaks of the Gospel in ways which are contrary to sound doctrine and subscribes to presentations of the Gospel which lead to theological confusion.
2. Dr. Tietjen became a principal party in the Seminary dispute and thus rendered himself unable to mediate and settle doctrinal disagreements within the faculty.
3. Dr. Tietjen was administratively irresponsible.
4. Dr. Tietjen presumptuously and wrongfully assumed Board of Control duties and prerogatives.
5. Dr. Tietjen on occasion intimidated Board of Control members.
6. Dr. Tietjen did not deal in a Christian manner with certain faculty members.
7. Dr. Tietjen demeaned the office of the Synodical President and defied the executive authority thereof.
8. Dr. Tietjen opposed the Synodical President in his efforts to resolve the doctrinal problems at the Seminary.
9. Dr. Tietjen was insubordinate to the authority of the Board for Higher Education.
10. Dr. Tietjen failed to maintain careful watch over the spiritual welfare, the personal life, and the conduct of the student body.
11. Dr. Tietjen is rebelling against the very Synod, which he has been called to serve.
12. Dr. Tietjen has not been honest with us.<sup>1</sup>

## THE NOVEMBER BOARD MEETING [^](#)

The agenda materials for the November Board of Control meeting were prepared by Dr. Tietjen, as was customary, and mailed on November 12, one week before the meeting was to take place. In spite of the many critical issues facing the Seminary, Dr. Tietjen's recommended agenda contained essentially non-controversial items: matters concerning academic affairs, student affairs, business management, and Seminary relations. Also considered to be of top priority by Dr. Tietjen for the Board's executive session were the following:

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<sup>1</sup> "Evidence," released by Dr. John Tietjen, January 21, 1974, Section H, pp. 1-19.

1. A request from the English District Board of Directors which "resolved that we urgently request the St. Louis Concordia Seminary Board of Control to grant a hearing to representatives of the English District Board of Directors prior to taking any further action against our brother John Tietjen."
2. Belated comments by Dr. Tietjen concerning his presentation at the August ELIM assembly and the incident involving Seminary professors at the installation for synodical officers (September 24).
3. An attempt to delay both the Board's appeal to the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS) as well as the Board's request for copies of the Fact-Finding Committee report.

There was virtually no mention of those items which had been creating doctrinal unrest within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. The proposed agenda totally disregarded the meetings held between Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and Dr. Tietjen during October, the faculty outreach held October 21-29, and a discussion of the charges made by Dr. Tietjen at the Cleveland rally against the Board and the synodical administration.

In order to deal with more urgent issues facing the Seminary, the Board at the beginning of its November 19-20 meeting resolved to add to its agenda as priority items for consideration the following:

- 1) The possibility of extending the leave of absence of Professor Ralph Bohlmann.
- 2) The report of Pastors Buelow and Harnapp of November 13, 1973 and appropriate action thereon.
- 3) The establishment by the Board of Control of a retirement policy for professors and staff members.
- 4) Consideration of and action on the use of visiting professors and guest lecturers.
- 5) Consideration of and approval by the Board of Control of the curriculum at the Seminary.
- 6) Consideration of the duties of the incumbent president and his various actions together with appropriate action by the Board of Control in connection therewith.
- 7) Filing of an appeal with the American Association of Theological Schools by the Board of Control.

As the first item of business the Board received the correspondence from Pastors Buelow and Harnapp indicating that their October meetings with Dr. Tietjen had settled nothing. Then, proceeding with the case according to the provisions of Bylaw 6.79b, the Board resolved "to direct the chairman of the Board to attempt to deal, to the satisfaction of all concerned, with the matter of the charges against Dr. John H. Tietjen by Rev. L.P. Buelow and Rev. H.L. Harnapp."

The next major action of the Board was to establish a way of implementing the Synod's policy concerning the retirement of professors who have reached the age of sixty-five. Synodical Bylaw 6.82e provides that "Faculty members may be honorably retired or transferred to modified service by action of the Board of Control at the age of 65 or any year thereafter and shall be retired at the age of 75." The Board resolved to begin implementing this policy at the end of the Winter Quarter, March 1, 1974. At the same time, the Board wished to take into consideration the personal preferences of the professors involved regarding their desire to be retained in their present teaching positions, to be placed on modified service, or to be retired. The Board therefore asked the academic dean to provide it with such information from each of the men over sixty-five by December 10, 1973. After receiving that information, the Board intended to reach a decision as to which men would be retired on March 1. However, Seminary administrators immediately distorted the intention of the policy.

Aware of its responsibility to the Synod under New Orleans Resolution 3-09 with regard to the doctrinal position of the faculty majority, the Board made Dr. Tietjen responsible for assembling course syllabi (an outline for course instruction) from the individual members of the faculty as well as their responses to New Orleans Resolutions 3-01 and 3-09. The Board also directed Dr. Tietjen personally to explain:

1. His participation in the July faculty protest;
2. His activity on behalf of the ELIM organization;
3. The absence of fifteen professors from the Seminary campus during the week of October 21-29 without the Board's awareness or approval;
4. His participation as an incorporating agent of FLUTE (Fund for Lutheran Theological Education);
5. The failure of the faculty to respond appropriately to New Orleans Resolution 3-09;
6. Various questions dealing with administrative irresponsibility.

The Board directed Dr. Tietjen to respond to these points in writing by December 10, 1973. However, Dr. Tietjen ignored the directive and failed to comply. Because of later student criticism of the Board's handling of Resolution 3-09, it is worth noting that the fifth point expressed the Board's conviction that initiative should have come from the **faculty** itself in dealing with the concerns of that resolution.

In other actions, the Board granted Dr. Ralph Bohlmann an extension of his leave of absence as professor from the Seminary in order that he might continue to serve as executive secretary for the Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The Board also declined to renew the contract of Prof. Paul Goetting at its expiration on June 30, 1974. In the latter case, the Board expressed a desire and entertained a motion to meet with Professor

Goetting. However, because of objections voiced by Dr. Tietjen and Academic Dean John Damm, the motion was defeated.

## REACTION AND ANALYSIS [^](#)

Concerning the Board's meeting, the November 20 official public relations release of the Synod stated simply that "The Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, took several actions at a lengthy meeting Monday, November 19, that was often marked by heated discussion." However, an editorial in ELIM's **Missouri in Perspective** of December 3, 1973, stated: "We cannot put the best construction on the patently sinful actions of the Board of Control. We must pronounce the word of God's judgment."

Was it true that the resolutions of the November Board meeting were sinful? Did they, in fact, merit the judgment of God? A sober and fair analysis indicates that the actions of the Board in the November meeting constituted a proper exercise of the duties and responsibilities incumbent upon a board of control. No evidence to the contrary has ever been submitted to the Board by anyone. Once again, in a pattern that was becoming more familiar, "public pressure" (to use Dr. Tietjen's expression) was to become the faculty's response.

## STUDENT REACTION [^](#)

The decisions reached at the November meeting of the Board of Control, although expected by several student leaders, set in motion the organization that eventually led to the student and faculty strike. The student leaders included members of the Student Administrative Council (SAC), various class leaders, and the president of "Students Concerned for Reconciliation under the Gospel" (SCRUG). SCRUG was by far the most vocal group in its support of Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority. As witnessed in the student publication **Spectrum** of October 12, 1973, the group's president served as an advisory member of ELIM, which also included Dr. Tietjen as a member of its Board of Directors. SCRUG's membership was comprised primarily of on-campus students, plus vicars who were serving their year of internship in congregations around the country. As a group, SCRUG maintained its own separate funding and retained legal counsel.

Preparations were made early for the moratorium which was to take place in January, 1974. Already by early November, SCRUG had submitted to the Student Administrative Council a set of "contingency plans" which called for the organization of a demonstration committee, and laid the plans for a proposed moratorium in the event that any faculty member or administrator would be removed from his office.

At a November 28, 1973, student body convocation, Dr. John Tietjen reported that at the Board of Control's November meeting, "it became clear that the Board of Control was making evident what its policy was



going to be over against the rest of the institution.” After enumerating the various Board actions, Dr. Tietjen concluded:

Members of the faculty and staff have been talking with one another about the consequences of all of this for our life together here, but they have not come up with any kind of conclusion at the present time as to what sort of response should be made to this action of the Board.

However, as I read the faculty and staff at the present time, they are fully aware of the serious implications of these actions of the Board and are not likely to let them pass without some kind of major statement on the part of this institution.

Student reaction became increasingly more pronounced, judgmental, and rebellious. In an open letter to the student body, which appeared in the November 30 issue of *Spectrum*, the campus newspaper, student Kim Campbell stated:

In a veil of silence with an appearance of legality, the Board has acted with a demonic persistence in executing these unfair, uncharitable, unLutheran, and grossly unchristian acts.

In reality, the Board has perpetrated these injustices against all the faculty, against all the seminary community, and against all Christendom.

The same issue of *Spectrum* carried an editorial entitled "Indecency and Disorder" which stated, "The Board has begun the destruction of Concordia Seminary and the destruction of our denomination," and concluded, "There was a day when decency and order were the watchwords of Missouri. Today, these words have been replaced by their antonyms, and the students of Concordia Seminary must act accordingly."

## **AN ATTEMPT TO RECONCILE [^](#)**

Board Chairman E.j. Otto made several contacts with Pastors Buelow and Harnapp and Dr. Tietjen in order to arrange a meeting in compliance with the November Board of Control directive and in accordance with the provisions of Bylaw 6.79b. The concerned parties met at a Holiday Inn in St. Louis on November 28, 1973, at 2:00 P.M. In the written notice mailed to the three men, Pastor Otto requested that they be prepared to stay at the meeting "as long as necessary."

The meeting was quite brief and failed to achieve a resolution of the issues. Without the courtesy of previously informing or asking the consent of the two pastors and the Board chairman, Dr. Tietjen brought with him to the meeting faculty member Dr. Richard Caemmerer and Attorney Richard Duesenberg. This action by Dr. Tietjen did not contribute to the spirit and purpose of the meeting, namely, fraternal discussion and the possible resolution of issues.

Dr. Tietjen's decision, announced in January, 1974, that he would no longer participate in the synodically adopted procedures pertaining to his case was already evident in November. By the way in which he participated in the early steps of the procedures designed to resolve the issues, if possible, he had given the Board no choice but to carry through the remaining provisions of Bylaw 6.79.

## DAY OF THEOLOGICAL REFLECTION [▲](#)

The student leaders' reaction to the November Board of Control meeting was presented to the student body on December 5, 1973, during the "Day of Theological Reflection." In previous years most days of "theological reflection" had been held jointly with the Springfield Seminary for the purpose of considering a theological topic of current importance. Even though the Springfield Seminary had declined to take part in the December "Day of Theological Reflection," the faculty cancelled classes in order that the students might consider various documents of support for the faculty majority.

In preparation, student body president Gerald Miller wrote in the December 4 **Spectrum**:

Those of you who are in full support of the faculty majority would do well to address yourselves not only to the question: "How much can we do to support them?" but also to the questions: "What types of actions would best show our support?" and "When might such supporting actions best be carried out?" Those of you who are not exactly sure of where you stand with respect to the faculty majority or to the issues which are at stake, would do well to admit that on Wednesday. It's not a day for daydreaming.

After most of the student body had met in small group sessions, the student leaders convened in the afternoon to adopt a document entitled "With One Voice: An Appeal by the Students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri." It was the beginning of a long series of protest documents drawn up by student leaders for ratification by the Seminary community. Although the document contained conciliatory language, its intent was clear: "As members of the body of Christ and students at Concordia Seminary, we stand with the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis."<sup>2</sup> If the Board of Control would not reconsider the decisions made at its November 19, 1973 meeting, the students declared that the Board "will have to proceed against all the members of the student body."

The protest document "With One Voice" was in essence an ultimatum to the Board of Control. However, other proposals that were put before the Student Association that day were even more radical. One such document

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<sup>2</sup> "With One Voice" is included with the section "Student Documents," Appendix G. 2, pp. 173f.

proposed that the second and fourth-year students decline their vicarage assignments and their calls into the ministry if the Board of Control failed to rescind the decisions made at its November meeting. Another document proposed establishing a fund for members of the faculty and administration of the Seminary who might be displaced by actions of the Board of Control.

The implications of the "With One Voice" document were far-reaching. First of all, the faculty majority cancelled classes for the announced purpose that the students might study the issues of the synodical controversy. But the students were exposed only to the faculty majority's position as supported by the student leaders; no one was invited to speak for the Board of Control or the Synod.

It was apparent that the issues had become muddled and confused. Instead of considering the Synod's judgment (New Orleans Resolution 3-09) against the faculty majority's stated theological position, the students responded emotionally to what they believed was their professors' sincere Christian witness. The Synod's resolution had condemned a position, but many students apparently understood this as a condemnation of **persons**.

Dr. Martin Scharlemann, a member of the faculty minority, attempted words of sober counsel in a letter to the student publication, **Spectrum**. He wrote:

It ought to be said with emphasis, no one has questioned the fact that our Seminary professors are Christians, who can even be patient under fire. The issue which is before the church is whether they have dealt responsibly from within the Missouri Synod with contemporary theological and doctrinal problems. The convention at New Orleans voted that they had not done so responsibly.

Dr. Scharlemann's letter also stated that the student document ("With One Voice") was a diversion which did not address itself to the question at issue.

The "Day of Theological Reflection" brought the ultimate crisis much closer. The student leaders had successfully united a significant number of students in strong and emotional support of the faculty majority with little regard to either the actual circumstances or the possible consequences. The die which was to produce a moratorium and a walkout had been cast.

## **CANCELLATION OF DECEMBER BOARD MEETING [^](#)**

The agenda for the scheduled December 17, 1973 meeting of the Board was prepared by Dr. Tietjen and sent to the Board members on December 10. It included both a December 4 protest letter from the faculty majority and a statement by Dr. Tietjen. The letter from the faculty majority protested the Board's non-renewal of Paul Goetting's contract and the proposed retirement of faculty members over the age of sixty-five. The faculty wrote:

We are one with them in protest and confession. Isn't it true that what you are doing to these experienced, seasoned ministers and

teachers, you must do to all of us? We are in conscience bound not only to protest orally, but to take appropriate actions to back up our protest.

In view of later events, the threat of “appropriate actions” was particularly significant.

In the agenda materials, Dr. Tietjen offered the following statement on the “Day of Theological Reflection” held on December 5. He wrote:

The “Day of Theological Reflection” is the students' attempt to deal constructively with the synodical controversy. A student committee made up of the Student Administrative Council, the Commission on Seminary Concerns and other various student committees worked on this event which was held on Wednesday, December 5.

Discussions in small groups both by class and across class lines gave students an opportunity to express their views and to clarify their thinking about major issues. Some proposals were submitted during the day and will be given consideration as the student committee develops its planning.

Although the summary by Dr. Tietjen is basically factual, he failed to mention several important points to the Board. The student proposal submitted prior to the “Day of Theological Reflection” accused the Board of grave injustices. Dr. Tietjen failed not only to mention what these charges were, but also that the students had been led to believe there was some substance to their accusations.

From his summary it appeared that the various student groups were still working separately and independently. He failed to mention that the Expanded Commission on Seminary Concerns (ECSC), which included all student leaders, was formed in early November with the objective to deal exclusively with “contingency plans” with respect to “an eventual and expected crisis” at Concordia Seminary. Moreover, Dr. Tietjen failed to mention to the Board that the Student Association had already decided to send the document “With One Voice” to the Synod and was at that time seeking signatures from among the student body for this document.

Although Dr. Tietjen stated in the December 10 agenda materials that among the student body there existed “a spirit of gloomy pessimism and doubt about the future of Concordia Seminary,” he gave no indication that the faculty majority and student leaders were working closely together against the Board of Control. A faculty majority member later wrote that “sharing leadership responsibilities between faculty and students led to a sense of participatory churchmanship” which had “a growing sense of awareness of the implications of the board actions for the Synod — not only

in terms of the impact of these actions themselves, but the spirit of legalism which pervaded them all."<sup>3</sup>

The plans for the Board of Control meeting had been finalized, but the Board was unaware that, as one faculty majority member wrote, the student body had been "mobilized" for action.

Yet the unexpected happened. On December 13, four days before the scheduled Board of Control meeting, Dr. Arthur Carl Piepkorn, a member of the faculty majority, died. On December 17, a so-called "Requiem Eucharist" was held in Dr. Piepkorn's honor in the chapel of Concordia Seminary, with members of various other denominations, including Roman Catholics, participating in the reception of Holy Communion.

Out of respect for Dr. Piepkorn and at the request of his family, the Board of Control cancelled the meeting of December 17, 1973, over the strong protest of Dr. Tietjen, who insisted that the Board should hold its meeting later that day, even though Dr. Piepkorn's funeral had been held just that morning.

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<sup>3</sup> Larry Neeb, "The Historical and Theological Dimension of a Confessing Movement within The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod," unpublished Doctor of Ministry dissertation (St. Louis, 1975), p. 162.

## VII

### SUSPENSION AND MORATORIUM [^](#)

The faculty majority and the student leaders moved quickly to implement "contingency plans" for the upcoming Board meeting in January. On December 20, the Faculty Advisory Committee (FAC) met with student leaders (ECSC) to discuss possible plans for the Christmas holidays. A member of the faculty majority later described the function of the pro- Tietjen Faculty Advisory Committee:

Often unheralded during this period and in the months following President Tietjen's suspension was the crucial leadership of a Faculty Advisory Committee, elected by the faculty at the inception of the investigation (1970).

...

Functioning as a "corporate presidency" the group utilized dialogue, group process, and shared responsibility achieving consensus among students and faculty on virtually every issue, preparing both groups for the events that would take place following the actual suspension of Tietjen in January.<sup>1</sup>

As the minutes of that December 20 joint FAC and ECSC meeting show, Dr. Tietjen reported that he felt the Board of Control's January meeting would include the implementation of hard line tactics, including his own suspension. Dr. Herbert Mayer added that it would be good if students kept in close contact during the Christmas recess, especially to disseminate accurate information to one another. Dr. Robert Bertram reported that the faculty majority had already planned a conditional walkout during the last month in the event of Dr. Tietjen's suspension. Dr. Robert Smith concluded that "some of us feel that staying out of the classroom says, 'Dismiss Tietjen and you dismiss us.' "

#### THE JANUARY 7 BOARD MEETING [^](#)

In calling a special meeting of the Board of Control to be held on January 7, 1974, Board Chairman E.J. Otto had on December 27, 1973, placed the following item on the agenda as of primary importance:

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<sup>1</sup> Larry Neeb, "The Historical and Theological Dimension of a Confessing Movement within The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod," unpublished Doctor of Ministry dissertation (St. Louis, Mo., 1975), p. 162. Members of the FAC at this time were Dr. Robert Bertram, Dr. Richard Caemmerer, Dr. Alfred Fuerbringer, Dr. Ralph Klein, Dr. Herbert Mayer, Dr. Robert Smith, and Prof. Andrew Weyermann. Dr. Edgar Krentz, who had served on the committee, was on a sabbatical leave in Germany at this time.

To discuss possible action on Dr. Tietjen's failure to comply with the Board's directive of November 19, 1973, to explain in writing by December 10, 1973, how he reconciles his position as seminary president with five concerns of the Board.

Although Dr. Tietjen failed to respond in writing to the concerns which the Board had requested in November, he wrote in the December Board agenda materials that he was prepared to answer those questions orally at the December meeting if called upon to do so. In other words, the Board was faced with an act of defiance by Dr. Tietjen in his refusal to comply with the Board's directive. On January 7, 1974, the Board gave consideration to initiating disciplinary action according to the provisions of Bylaw 6.79a, but finally adopted a substitute motion which asked Dr. Tietjen to discuss the five concerns of the Board. His brief remarks were followed by a Board resolution which again asked Dr. Tietjen to provide his answers in writing and to present them at the next Board meeting to be held on January 20.

## **STUDENT ACTION [^](#)**

There can be no doubt that student leaders were preparing the student body as a whole for some type of drastic action to be taken in the event of Dr. Tietjen's suspension. From the beginning of the school year in September, student leaders had closely associated themselves with the leaders of SCRUG, the most radical student group and the most supportive of the faculty majority. Proposals considered by the entire student body as recommendations from student leaders were without exception totally supportive of Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority. Students who were loyal to the Synod's historic doctrinal position, supportive of the faculty minority, or non-committed, were given little or no voice in student affairs. The student leadership no longer sought to represent the entire student body, preferring those special interest groups which had committed themselves to support Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority.

On January 20, 1974, the student leaders ratified a document entitled, "A Student Resolution," which specifically called for a moratorium on classes. As the January 19 SCRUG minutes show, this document was ratified by the ECSC. As for the moratorium concept, it had been considered months in advance of Dr. Tietjen's suspension. The SAC also resolved to read it before the student body if Dr. Tietjen were suspended and, in addition, to make a public reading of the document in front of the Luther statue on the Seminary campus and at synodical headquarters in downtown St. Louis.

## **TIETJEN SUSPENDED, JANUARY 20 [^](#)**

Beginning in September, the Board sought to reach a peaceful and amicable solution to the doctrinal problems presented in the charges against Dr. Tietjen by the two parish pastors. As the procedures for dealing with such charges were followed (Bylaw 6.79a and b), it became clear that no resolution of the issues would be achieved. Dr. Tietjen was willing to

bring “public pressure” on the synodical administration and the Board of Control, but he was unwilling to be governed by the decisions of the Synod as they pertained to his and his colleagues' stated doctrinal position.

Under these conditions, the Board of Control on January 20, 1974, was left with no choice but to suspend Dr. Tietjen temporarily from his position under the provisions of Bylaw 6.79d, which provides for such action when the unresolved charges are of a serious nature. The Board minutes show:

WHEREAS, the Board of Control heretofore directed the chairman of the Board of Control to attempt to deal, to the satisfaction of all concerned, with the charges made by Rev. L.P. Buelow and Rev.

H.L. Harnapp against Dr. John H. Tietjen, as president of Concordia Seminary (St. Louis), and

WHEREAS, the chairman of the Board of Control has reported to the Board of Control upon his efforts in that connection, and has advised the Board of Control that such efforts were unsuccessful,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Control shall, and it hereby does, decide to proceed regarding said charges, and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, since some of said charges may be of a theological nature, the Board of Control shall, and it hereby does, direct that the theological questions at issue be, by the chairman or the secretary of the Board of Control, submitted to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for an advisory opinion.

Furthermore, the minutes read:

WHEREAS, the Board of Control has heretofore decided to proceed in connection with the charges made by Rev. L.P. Buelow and Rev. H.L. Harnapp against Dr. John H. Tietjen, as president of Concordia Seminary (St. Louis), and

WHEREAS, the Board of Control has examined and considered the charges made by Rev. L.P. Buelow and Rev. H.L. Harnapp, against Dr. John H. Tietjen, as president of Concordia Seminary,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that said charges against Dr. John H. Tietjen, as president of Concordia Seminary be, and they are hereby, determined by the Board of Control to be of a nature serious enough to threaten immediate harm to said Seminary, and the Board of Control and the faculty thereof, and The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and the members thereof, by his continuance as president and a member of the faculty of said Seminary; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board of Control shall, and it does hereby, suspend, Dr. John H. Tietjen from all of his duties as president, and as a member of the faculty, of Concordia Seminary, effective immediately; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that, in accordance with the provisions of Bylaw 6.79d of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, the



contractual obligation of Concordia Seminary to Dr. John H. Tietjen shall continue until the aforesaid charges against him shall be resolved.

It should be noted that the Board of Control action, although serious, was nevertheless only a temporary suspension from his duties. Dr. Tietjen's full salary and other benefits, including housing, were continued. Such temporary suspension under Bylaw 6.79 is not dismissal from office, nor does it mean that the accused has been found guilty. It rather provides time for three groups to deal with the charges and with the accused in a continuing effort to resolve the issues. The Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) first considers the theological question(s) at issue and then renders an opinion. A Faculty Hearings Committee considers all charges, provides for an open hearing, and then issues its findings. With these in hand, the Board of Control provides for another hearing and then renders a decision in the case.

The suspension decision in this case was not made in haste, but was reached after a process involving many months of prayer, discussion, and personal confrontation between Dr. Tietjen and his accusers, as well as mediation efforts by the Board of Control and its chairman. The Synod continued to wait patiently and expectantly for a peaceful resolution of the case and the assurance that the doctrine of its Seminary President and faculty was in harmony with the Synod's position. In that expectation, the Synod had adopted Resolution 3-12a which directed the Board of Control to deal with Dr. Tietjen. In suspending Dr. Tietjen, the Board recognized its responsibility to the Synod.

Dr. Tietjen, however, was determined to act outside the proper channels of the Synod which he was called to serve. After his suspension, he stated that the Board could not possibly be aware of the harm to the institution and to the Synod that was going to happen as a result of his suspension. He said that, after consulting with God in prayer and privately with his friends, he would issue a response. Afterwards he would ask God to forgive the Board for the evil that the Board had done. Dr. Tietjen then withdrew from the room.

## **STUDENT MORATORIUM [^](#)**

It is difficult to recapture the spectrum of emotions present on the campus of Concordia Seminary on Monday morning, January 21, 1974, the day following the suspension action by the Board. Some students were outraged, but most were confused. However, there can be little doubt that the student leaders were well prepared for this moment.

In the presence of representatives from the public media, the students met at 8:00 A.M. on the morning of January 21. The first item on the agenda was the consideration of "A Student Resolution," which had been adopted by the Student Administrative Council on the previous day. After printed

copies of the resolution were handed out to the students, student body president Gerald Miller read the resolution. He then announced that Dr. Tietjen had some words to say to the students before any action was to be taken on it.



Students debate moratorium resolution on January 21, 1974 following Dr. Tietjen's suspension.

In his presentation, Dr. Tietjen read a "Statement to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod" on the occasion of his suspension from office as president and professor of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. In his "Statement," Dr. Tietjen maintained that the Board of Control made its decision to suspend him only after efforts by "agents of the President of Synod" to arrange a "deal" had proved unsuccessful. Terms of the "deal," according to Dr. Tietjen, were that if he agreed to accept a call, none of the faculty members over sixty-five years of age would be retired, Prof. Paul Goetting would be re-engaged, a one-year moratorium would be declared on all efforts to remove faculty members, and the theological charges preferred against him would not be pursued. Dr. Tietjen also maintained that unless he agreed to the "deal" his suspension was inevitable.

Dr. Tietjen declared that not only would he not consider being a party to such a deal, but also that he considered the proposed deal to be immoral. "Devoid of any integrity, it plays with people's lives," he stated. Saying that he would not participate in such evil, he maintained that

The members of our Synod must become aware of the moral bankruptcy of the actions of the present leadership of our Synod

and of the Seminary's Board of Control. Such evil, if allowed to continue, will bring the judgment of God's wrath on us all.

Dr. Tietjen accused the synodical administration and the Board of Control of "oppressive legalism" and declared that he would take no further action in his own defense throughout the remaining provisions of Bylaw 6.79. He continued:

The present proceedings being conducted by the Board of Control on the basis of Bylaw 6.79 offer no possibility of a fair and impartial judgment. They are the results of collusion between the President of the Synod, the six majority members of the Board of Control, and my two accusers. They are a charade in which my two accusers and the majority members of the Board are seeking to fulfill the letter of the Bylaws for the purpose of reaching a pre-determined objective already publicly announced by the President of Synod, to remove me from office and from my pastoral ministry of the Synod.

In calling the proceedings against him a "sham," a "mockery," and a "charade," Dr. Tietjen said he was determined to release to the church what he termed "pertinent information relating to the proceedings." Later that morning, Dr. Tietjen released hundreds of copies of a voluminous collection of documents, entitled "Evidence," which contained confidential transcripts of his meetings with the two parish pastors and his evaluation of the proceedings. Those documents had been made available to the Board of Control only a few hours earlier.

The evidence indicates that Dr. Tietjen's decision to share his so-called "Evidence" with the press was made far in advance of January 21, 1974. In any event, the documents he released that day were not simply the direct result of "consulting with God in prayer" the night of his suspension, as Dr. Tietjen suggested to the Board. As a matter of fact, his so-called "Evidence" had been prepared and assembled through the Office of Seminary Relations more than a month earlier for the December Board of Control meeting which was cancelled at the request of Dr. Piepkorn's family.

In releasing his so-called "Evidence," Dr. Tietjen also violated the provisions of synodical Bylaw 5.31j, which stipulates, "While a case is still undecided or while appeals are contemplated or pending, there shall be no publicity of the case by any party to the proceeding." By breaking this important Bylaw, Dr. Tietjen also jeopardized his chances of winning any subsequent appeals action. Be that as it may, Dr. Tietjen again demonstrated that he would rather attempt to apply "public pressure" than to follow the orderly procedure provided by the Bylaws. Because they honor the "no publicity" provision of the Bylaws, the other parties in this case have to this date refrained from releasing any confidential material pertinent to it.

Dr. Tietjen's lengthy and emotional statement had a tremendous impact upon the student body as it was considering some type of reaction to the

Board of Control's suspension of Dr. Tietjen. Student Association president Gerald Miller again read the moratorium resolution in which the students resolved:

To declare a moratorium on all classes until such time as the Seminary Board of Control officially and publicly declares which members of the faculty, if any, are to be considered as false teachers, and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated.<sup>2</sup>

After surprisingly little debate, a standing vote was taken which showed 274 students in favor of the resolution, 92 against, and 15 abstentions.

Gerald Miller then proceeded to deliver the student moratorium resolution to the Board of Control. Afterwards, the students assembled in front of the Luther statue where "A Student Resolution" was read, signifying that the students considered their stand of conscience to be the same as Luther's. Later the student leaders delivered a copy of the moratorium resolution to the headquarters of The Lutheran Church- Missouri Synod in downtown St. Louis. Not surprisingly, all of these actions were given extensive coverage by the public media.

The Board of Control, for its part, responded immediately to the stated student concerns. Within a matter of hours after receiving the student moratorium resolution from the Student Association president, the Board passed the following assurance to the striking students and professors:

The Board of Control pledges itself to make all deliberate haste in resolving the implications of Resolution 3-09 of New Orleans over against the faculty.

The Board of Control asks that professors and students return to their classes forthwith.

Although approximately one-half of the resident student body had voted in favor of the moratorium resolution, it was the only resolution considered. Because the student leaders and Dr. Tietjen planned the agenda and meeting with professional proficiency and prepared their documents far in advance of the actual suspension, it was obvious that only one position was to be tolerated within the student body, namely, full support of the faculty majority and Dr. Tietjen. Members of the synodical administration, the Board of Control, and conservative students were never given a fair hearing, let alone a chance to present their views to the student body as a whole. Rather, student leaders had allied themselves with the leadership of SCRUG, which was fully supportive of Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority throughout the school year and was now in a position to lead the student body whatever way it chose. Hugh Fitz, then a first-year seminarian, later commented,

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<sup>2</sup>This resolution is included in the "Student Documents," Appendix G. 3, pp. 174f.

I abstained from the voting partly because I was against the moratorium and saw it as being merely a cover-up. The student leaders claimed that they wanted to know what profs were guilty of false teaching before they returned to classes. But that had absolutely nothing to do with the actions of that day.

When the Board informed us that it could not do that immediately, the students rejected this explanation. It was strange that the moratorium resolution was passed without alteration. It was introduced by the student government at the beginning of the session rather than being a resolution from the floor of the student body meeting.

## **THE TIETJEN "DEAL" [^](#)**

From the student perspective, a matter of grave concern was the "deal" allegedly offered to Dr. Tietjen by "agents" of Dr. J.A.O. Preus. An ELIM news release of January 28, 1974, reported:

He [Tietjen] rejected this "deal" for two reasons. First, he rejected the arrangements because its provisions turned faculty members and their families into pawns for political objectives. Secondly, he maintained that if there is any truth to his alleged false doctrine, this should be determined before he would be "inflicted" upon another community of Christian people.

For a proper understanding of the "deal," some background is in order. Starting in August, 1973, the Board of Control had been dealing with Dr. Tietjen according to the synodically adopted procedures for handling charges against a faculty member as detailed in synodical Bylaw 6.79. Prescribed efforts to resolve the matter between Dr. Tietjen and the complainants by the Board of Control and its chairman had proved fruitless. The time had come for the Board to decide whether the charges against Dr. Tietjen were of sufficient gravity to warrant temporary suspension until the three synodically designated groups (CTCR, Faculty Hearings Committee, and the Board of Control) could study the theological questions at issue as well as the charges of false doctrine and malfeasance in office against Dr. Tietjen.

It was apparent that the suspension could hardly be avoided. But as the date of the Board's January meeting approached, many well-intentioned people hoped for, gave thought to, and engaged in discussions regarding a possible, less traumatic action. Among those were Mr. Victor Bryant, Director of Public Relations of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod, and the Rev. Larry Neeb, then Director of Communications at Concordia Seminary.

Already in the fall of 1973, Mr. Bryant participated in several conversations with Rev. Neeb. After considerable discussion, both Mr. Bryant and Rev. Neeb agreed that one possible way to solve the conflict at the Seminary might be for Dr. Tietjen to accept a call elsewhere. Both men decided to

discuss such a possibility: Mr. Bryant with Dr. Preus, and Rev. Neeb with Dr. Tietjen. In subsequent conversations, it was agreed that all parties were indeed willing to listen. Mr. Bryant then had numerous phone conversations with Rev. Neeb, Missouri District President Herman Scherer, and Atlantic District President Rudolph Ressmeyer (who in turn discussed the possibilities with English District President John Baumgaertner). Regarding these conversations, Mr. Bryant in a January 24 press release stated:

My request to Larry [Neeb] was to ask John [Tietjen] if he would put in writing his requirements for reconciliation for discussion with the chairman of the seminary board, the only body which would have the authority. A final phone call stated that John had decided he would not accept a call. The meaningful discussion had ended.

Another effort toward a peaceful solution was that of the English District President, Dr. John Baumgaertner, who called Board Chairman E.J. Otto shortly before the Board's January 20 meeting and asked whether the Board would pursue the charges against Dr. Tietjen if the latter were to accept a call into a parish. Pastor Otto reported that, according to the synodical **Handbook**, any Board of Control has jurisdiction only over its own faculty members. If, therefore, Dr. Tietjen were to accept a call, any further procedure would be up to the district president in which Dr. Tietjen was serving. When Pastor Otto asked Dr. Baumgaertner whether Dr. Tietjen had a call at that moment, Dr. Baumgaertner replied, "No."

In his February 27, 1974, letter to members of the English District, Dr. John Baumgaertner explained that he had contacted Board Chairman E.J. Otto about the possibility of a call for Dr. Tietjen. He wrote:

He [Pastor Otto] phoned to tell me that he had not discussed my questions with any members of the Board of Control, but that he himself had a suggestion to make which would make things easier for all concerned.

The suggestion was this: Let Dr. Tietjen present himself with a call in hand, or, if there was no call in hand, with a clear-cut resignation without prejudice, and all would be well. No reference was made to other faculty members nor was this rather nebulous "conciliatory approach" referred to as a deal.

Perhaps other similar exploratory conversations took place at that time as well-meaning people on both sides of the issue sought a resolution less drastic than the suspension of Dr. Tietjen. However, the Board of Control was at no time involved in any such exploration. When the Board of Control, during one of its meetings, received a telephone call from a St. Louis television station asking for a possible comment regarding the alleged "deal," the Board's prompt response was that it knew of no deal and had participated in nothing of the kind.

Commenting on the Bryant-Neeb conversations, President J.A.O. Preus on January 28, 1974, in his "Message to the Church," stated:

[Mr. Bryant's efforts] are distorted and subject to half-truths and misinterpretation. I can think of no better words to describe this whole sordid affair than Doctor Tietjen's own words, "moral bankruptcy. ..."

Word has reached us that while he was in all innocence and sincerity talking with the "agent" of Doctor Tietjen, Professor Larry Neeb (who also happens to be the editor of the ELIM journal, "Missouri in Perspective"), unbeknown to Mr. Bryant, his conversations were being tape recorded. This kind of trickery is beneath description and contempt.

Yesterday students around the church stated that Doctor Tietjen had "documentary evidence" to prove that a "deal" had been made. This is the way the "evidence" was gathered.

The timing of Dr. Tietjen's allegation also raises serious questions. If Dr. Tietjen considered such exploratory discussions as a "deal" which he termed "immoral," it is difficult to understand how he could in good conscience withhold the information from December 8, the date when the "deal" was allegedly offered, until January 21, the date when he announced details of the so-called "deal" to the student body and the general public. The "deal" apparently was not so "immoral" as to prevent Dr. Tietjen from holding his allegation until it could be used as another incident in his general strategy of "public pressure." The fact of the matter is that his allegation of a so-called "deal" not only misrepresented the facts, but was used as a device to incite the students against the synodical administration and the Board of Control just before the students were to vote on their critical resolution to go on strike. The student action in adopting that resolution was anything but spontaneous.

## **FACULTY MAJORITY STRIKE** [^](#)

After the students met in the morning of January 21 and declared their moratorium on attending classes, the members of the faculty majority also voted to strike, that is, not to teach any of their scheduled classes. They also resolved to issue a statement on January 22, 1974, to the Synod and to Dr. Preus.<sup>3</sup> In an attempt to make the Board of Control responsible for "emptying the classrooms" at Concordia Seminary, the faculty majority claimed that in suspending Dr. Tietjen the Board was guilty of "silencing the teaching of the Word of God." They also affirmed their solidarity with Dr. Tietjen, declaring:

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<sup>3</sup>It is interesting to note the time sequence of these events.

Monday, January 21, 1974

8-10 A.M. — The moratorium resolution is passed at the Student Association meeting;

By condemning President Tietjen's confessional stand and suspending him from office, the Board of Control has condemned our own confession and has suspended all of us from our duties as teachers and executive staff members.

The fact that this statement is simply not true obviously did not constrain the faculty majority from issuing it. They must have known not only that they had **not** been charged or suspended from anything, but also that under the provisions of Bylaw 6.79, "suspension" does not imply guilt or condemnation but rather that "the charge is serious enough to threaten immediate harm to the accused or others." Their document also called into question the charges that had been raised against Dr. Tietjen. While they now requested that the President of Synod personally intervene in behalf of the faculty majority at Concordia Seminary and Dr. Tietjen, they had objected strenuously when Dr. Preus earlier had shown repeated concern regarding conditions at the Seminary.

Much has been made of the faculty majority's assertion that "the students acted first" by declaring the moratorium. However, as the evidence reveals, this is not the complete story. It is a fact that the student leaders had considered a moratorium proposal at least as early as November. However, according to the minutes of its meeting, as late as December 12, 1973, the ECSC (student leaders) had voted not to support a three-day moratorium of classes if Dr. Tietjen were suspended at the December meeting of the Board. Nevertheless, at a joint meeting on December 20, 1973, between members of the ECSC and the FAC (Faculty Advisory Committee), the minutes clearly state that Dr. Robert Bertram announced that the faculty majority had planned a conditional walkout during December if Dr. Tietjen had been suspended at that time. It therefore appears that the January faculty strike had been planned by the faculty at least one month in advance. Moreover, correspondence left behind in the Seminary's administrative offices strongly suggests that faculty planning for such an eventuality had actually begun even earlier than that.

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11 A.M. — Student Association President Gerald Miller delivers the student moratorium resolution to the Board;

2 P.M. — The Board responds to the stated concerns of the student's moratorium resolution;

Evening — The faculty majority meets to consider a response to Dr. Tietjen's suspension;

9 P.M. — The Board of Control adjourns;

Late Evening — The faculty votes to strike, in effect, suspending themselves from classes.

On the morning of January 22, the **St. Louis Globe-Democrat** reported on its front page: "Striking Students Shut Concordia, Back Tietjen." Concerning the faculty, the article stated: Faculty members also met during the day, but there was no report on their activities." The afternoon **St. Louis Post-Dispatch** noted in its front page story: "Majority at Concordia Suspend Themselves."

There was no official communication from the faculty majority to the Board of Control of its decision to go on strike; the Board did not learn of the faculty strike until it was reported in the public media.



## APPOINTMENT OF DR. SCHARLEMANN [^](#)

Following its temporary suspension of Dr. Tietjen on January 20, 1974, the Board of Control placed the awesome responsibility of serving as the Acting President of Concordia Seminary on Dr. Martin Scharlemann, a long-time member of the faculty and one of the so-called "faculty minority."

On Tuesday afternoon, January 22, 1974, the faculty majority responded to the Board's appointment of Dr. Martin Scharlemann as Acting President with a resolution in which they asked Dr. Scharlemann to resign and declared that they would not accept him as Acting President.

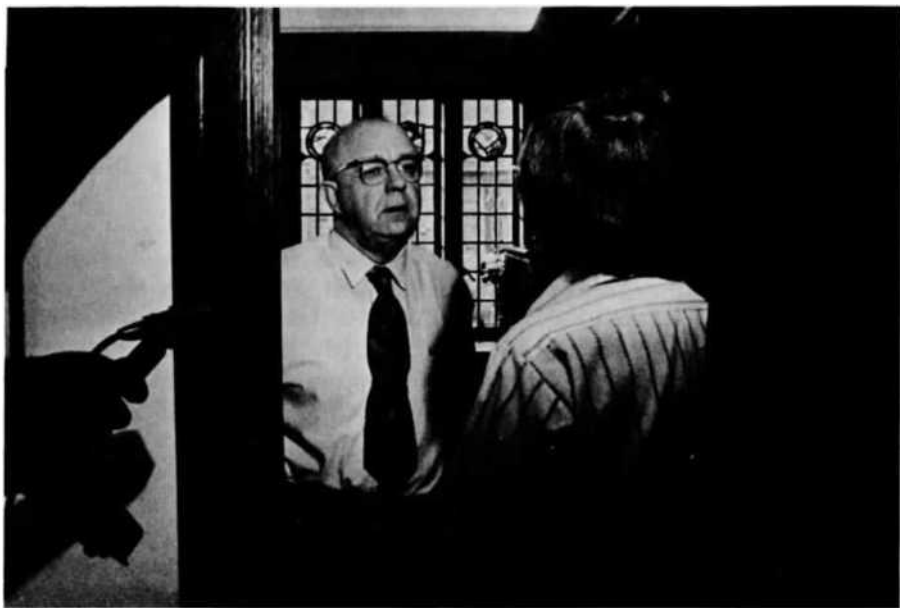
In its statement on Acting President Martin Scharlemann, released to the news media, the faculty majority launched a massive personal attack against him. In this document, the faculty majority stated that Dr. Scharlemann came under attack for various studies he initiated in the late 1950's. During that time his colleagues claimed to have defended him, and that Dr. Scharlemann remained in his teaching position even though the Seminary thereby lost wide support which it had previously enjoyed in the church. Furthermore, the faculty majority claimed that in 1969 Dr. Scharlemann had actively sought the presidency of Concordia Seminary, and that as a direct result of Dr. Tietjen's election, he had sent his 1970 letter to President J.A.O. Preus requesting an official investigation of the same Seminary faculty which had staunchly supported him in his time of trouble. Therefore, it was their contention that Dr. Scharlemann's actions contributed to the downfall of President John Tietjen and the faculty majority.

The statement by the faculty majority was released to the students who were meeting in convocation in the chapel-auditorium that afternoon. Several student leaders joined in the personal attack against the Acting President. Dr. Scharlemann, for his part, communicated with student leaders that he wished to address the student body on Wednesday at 10 A.M. in the chapel. However, the students passed a resolution which stated that Dr. Scharlemann could only address the student body at 9 A.M. or at 1 P.M. Moreover, they asserted that he could only appear in his position as acting executive officer of the Board of Control and not as Acting President of Concordia Seminary. This resolution was delivered to Dr. Scharlemann by a student leader, accompanied by newspapermen and TV cameramen.

Commenting on March 10, 1974, to the Seminary community regarding the personal abuse suffered by Dr. Scharlemann, synodical President J.A.O. Preus stated:

People often talk about me being lonely. I think there is a man who has suffered as much loneliness, as much harassment, and as much unpleasantness as anybody in the church. That is Dr. Scharlemann.

I think Dr. Scharlemann is a very brave man. He has a long record of service. He has been a man under fire in his own church, but he was man enough and it took great courage to come to the Cleveland



Seminarian Dave Reichert, accompanied by TV cameramen, delivers student resolution to Acting President Dr. Martin Scharlemann.

convention of the Synod and not say "I forgive you because you don't know any better" but he asked the church to forgive him. They [the convention] rose as one and thanked him, honored him, and said, "We support you."

In the January 28, 1974, "Message to the Church," Dr. Preus wrote,

Comments have been made that acting-President Scharlemann was himself once in difficulty with the Synod. This is true. The difference lies in the fact that Dr. Scharlemann asked the forgiveness of his church and received a rising ovation [from the Cleveland convention] and the heart-felt love and affection of the church. This was genuine reconciliation. Dr. Tietjen, on the other hand, by contrast, forgave the church and charged his church with "grievous wrong."

Dr. Scharlemann administered the heavy responsibilities as Acting President of Concordia Seminary during days of extreme stress, bitterness, and confusion, until he was forced to resign his position in early April because of nervous exhaustion. In accepting Dr. Scharlemann's resignation on April 22, 1974, the Board expressed its gratitude for his services by resolving:

We are grateful to the Lord of the Church that we had the benefit of Dr. Scharlemann's theological competence and administrative ability during the critical months of his service.

Dr. Scharlemann has served well, the Board of Concordia Seminary, the Seminary, the Church and our Lord. We commend Dr. Scharlemann to the healing and restoring care of our gracious God and we look forward to utilizing his teaching talents in the new academic year.

## VIII

### OUTREACH, OUTRAGE, AND EXODUS [^](#)

Because of the faculty majority strike and boycott on classes, Dr. Scharlemann suspended the class schedule for January 22-25, 1974. In a letter addressed to the faculty, Dr. Scharlemann stated that classes would be resumed on Monday, January 28, and that a faculty meeting would be held on Tuesday, January 29, in order to answer their inquiries and objections.



Dr. Robert Bertram conveys Faculty Advisory Committee opinion to student moratorium meeting.

About sixty percent of the students continued to meet daily in the chapel-auditorium as the student moratorium and faculty strike continued. At first the student leaders gave the impression that the issues were to be discussed and that dialogue was to be initiated among the students, the faculty, and the Board of Control.

### STUDENT "OUTREACH" [^](#)

However, the real goal of the student leaders for the moratorium surfaced by mid-week and was fully evident by Friday, January 25. By that time,

student leaders had been able to initiate and organize a student "outreach" in which Seminary students were to travel to various parts of the country for the express purpose of gaining support for Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority.

Extensive "outreach" materials were prepared, and elaborate itineraries organized through the efforts of the student leaders. The "outreach" materials included a brief history of the crisis in The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod and voiced personal attacks against synodical President Jacob Preus and Acting Seminary President Martin Scharlemann. The materials were designed to create the impression that the crisis in the Missouri Synod had originated and been fostered by conservatives under the leadership of Balance Incorporated (publishers of **Affirm**) and the editorial position of **Christian News**.

The seminarians were to attack the Board of Control on several well- planned themes. First of all, they were to accuse the Board of damaging their theological education and of putting the Gospel into second place: "When political power corrupts and controls, then the Gospel is put in second place." Secondly, they were to accuse the Board of power politics and legalistic authority. Thirdly, they were to encourage others to speak out to various boards and leaders in the church. Finally, they were to request financial support for the students and faculty majority.

The students were supplied various resource tools for "outreach" presentations. One statement that the students were asked to use was indeed indicative of the theological posture of the faculty majority in claiming that "The historical-critical methodology is necessary in order that a proper distinction between Law and Gospel may be maintained."<sup>1</sup>

Several pages were also supplied to the students as "fact sheets" to help them in their presentation to various audiences. One section was to be used to downgrade the principle of the inerrancy of Holy Scripture. It was suggested that students cite alleged discrepancies in the flood accounts, alleged discrepancies between the Old Testament books of Samuel-Kings and Chronicles, and various difficulties in the synoptic Gospels. A list of such Biblical references was included to help students convince their audiences that inerrancy was **not** to be considered a sound principle for Biblical interpretation.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> This statement is quite similar to one issued by Dr. Tietjen during the case involving Prof. Ehlen in 1972, when he stated, "It would not be possible to operate a department of exegetical theology at a graduate school without the use of historical-critical methodology." See above, pp. 32f., for the contrast of that remark.

<sup>2</sup> Samples of these materials are included in "Excerpts from Outreach' Materials, ' Appendix H, 1-4, pp. 177-183.

It is difficult to assess the importance of the student "outreach" of January 25-31. The faculty and student strike had provided student leaders ample time to prepare for such an "outreach." As the December 11, 1973 ECSC minutes show, the student group SCRUG had already planned the possibility of such an "outreach" during the Christmas holidays, but because Board action on Dr. Tietjen was delayed by the death of Dr. Piepkorn, those plans did not materialize at that time.



**Student Association President Gerald Miller explains purposes and goals of nationwide student "outreach."**

The facts are these: A student body meeting was called on Monday morning, January 21, by student leaders. At this meeting a moratorium proposal was handed out, discussed, and voted upon in a few hours. By Friday, barely three days after the students had decided to boycott classes supposedly to "discuss the issues," student leaders had already organized an "outreach" which involved nearly 250 Seminary students (about forty percent of the student body) who traveled to all parts of the country in order to speak at numerous meetings. Because of the public media's interest in such a project, students gathered in cars and drove past television cameras from one Seminary parking lot to another, giving the impression that they were leaving on their "outreach."

Dr. Scharlemann had asked everyone to be back in the classroom on Monday, January 28, after cancelling classes January 22-25, but the Acting President's request conflicted with the students' "outreach" schedule. On

February 14, Dr. Scharlemann wrote to the Board: "On that Monday morning some forty students showed up for various classes. The only faculty persons to appear were Dr. Robert Preus and myself." Drs. Klann and Wunderlich were also available for teaching assignments. It is worth noting that even under these extreme conditions members of the faculty minority fulfilled their responsibility to teach classes for those students who desired to continue their theological education in preparation for the office of the Holy Ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



Dr. Robert Preus teaches students who continued to attend classes during the student moratorium.

### **"MESSAGE TO THE CHURCH" [^](#)**

While the students were conducting their "outreach," synodical President J.A.O. Preus issued his "Message to the Church" dated January 28, 1974. In this document Dr. Preus insisted:

In saying, as I did before the convention, that Doctor Tietjen must go, I was only carrying out the duties which were imposed upon me by my office, namely to uphold the doctrinal position of our church and to exercise doctrinal supervision.

The record of Doctor Tietjen is abundantly clear as one of defiance towards the present Board of Control, of failure to deal with integrity with the previous Board of Control, of defiance toward the synodical President and more particularly and most seriously of all, of defiance toward the convention of the Synod.

With regard to the faculty strike and the boycott on classes at Concordia Seminary, President Preus wrote,

You are educated and learned men and masters of the use of words in many languages. But the Word which the church is longing to hear from you it does not hear.

The church does not want to be told that you forgive it because it does not know what it is doing, or to have students commissioned, like the twelve apostles, to go out into the congregations with the Gospel according to Concordia Seminary.

The church has waited for years to hear words like: "We repent, we ask the forgiveness of the church, we have been wrong, we are sorry, we have been arrogant and self-righteous, we have tried to change the theology of the church without telling the church what we are doing."

In pleading with the professors to return to class, President Preus assured them, "The church stands ready to forgive you, to honor and love you, to hear and learn from you."

## **"APPENDIX SIX" [^](#)**

Also included in Dr. Preus' "Message to the Church" was the controversial "Appendix Six," a letter addressed to the Synod from students who remained at Concordia Seminary and wanted to attend classes. Because of their fear of recrimination, their names were placed on file with the Acting President, but were not included in the published letter. In this document, the students stated, "For years we have been harassed and bullied by those who call themselves evangelical." After this introduction, nineteen items were listed which charged members of the faculty majority with certain unethical actions. The letter was submitted by Dr. Scharlemann to the President of the Synod.

The publication of "Appendix Six" in Dr. Preus' "Message to the Church" caused considerable consternation in the Synod, especially among students who had not previously supported the moratorium and who generally termed themselves "conservative."

Student leaders quickly criticized synodical President J.A.O. Preus and Dr. Scharlemann for their participation in the publication of "Appendix Six." In a February 13, 1974 letter to the Synod, the student leaders wrote:

By allowing this letter to go to sixty thousand in our synod, President Preus has sinned against the Church and the Lord of the Church. He has encouraged rumor to be introduced from the pulpits where the forgiveness of sins should be preached.

In a February 1, 1974 letter adopted by the faculty majority and sent to the entire Synod, the faculty charged:



President Preus and Martin Scharlemann have collaborated in mass distribution of anonymous slanders against unnamed professors. Matthew 18 was no part of the process which they adopted.

In spite of the faculty's use of the term "slander," Dr. Scharlemann and the students who wrote the letter have insisted that their complaints have substance in fact and can be verified.

As frequently happened in those days, Dr. Scharlemann's role in this letter was exaggerated and misrepresented by various student leaders and members of the faculty majority. As a matter of fact, his participation in the document was limited to screening the various student complaints to make sure that they were well documented. It was Dr. Scharlemann's position that these matters could be dealt with later on an individual basis, involving the Board of Control if necessary.

The importance of publishing "Appendix Six" in Dr. Preus' "Message to the Church" should not be minimized. For one thing, the document was effectively used by members of the faculty majority and student leaders to persuade students who were not fully supportive of the faculty majority, the boycott of classes, and the student "outreach" to join in support of the student and faculty strike. There were many students in that category; in fact, about sixty percent of the student body took no active part in the nationwide "outreach" during the week of January 28, and many of these students continued to meet on campus in small group discussions. Secondly, the publication of "Appendix Six" was effectively used to persuade the undecided students that reconciliation was impossible with the Board of Control and the synodical administration. After considerable discussion, some of those students issued a critical response to "Appendix Six." The original intention of "Appendix Six" was to enable the church to hear another dimension of the story than the one being told by hundreds of other students as part of a well-organized publicity "outreach." In a church body that was already inundated by intemperate and ill-founded charges and accusations against synodical and Board officials, it was no doubt necessary for the people to hear what was said in "Appendix Six." But its impact on most students of Concordia Seminary in January, 1974, was negative.

## **PLANS FOR "SEMINEK" [^](#)**

After the student "outreach," the student Moratorium Coordinating Committee (MCC)<sup>3</sup> took steps to intensify its demands on Dr. Scharlemann and the Board of Control. In a letter of February 8, 1974, to the Board of Control, student body president Gerald A. Miller wrote:

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<sup>3</sup> After the January 21 moratorium, the student leadership changed its name from Expanded Commission on Seminary Concerns (ECSC) to Moratorium Coordinating Committee (MCC).

For that reason, we will structure teacher-student relationships in a manner consistent with our moratorium. Only when the Board answers our resolution will the moratorium be ended and will the decision be made whether to re-enter the classrooms of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

In responding to this letter for the Board, Dr. Scharlemann again pleaded with the students and faculty to return to their classes. His plea, for the most part, fell on deaf ears, for student leaders and followers were increasingly uncompromising in their notion that their strike was an effective means of expressing support for Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority. Many students and faculty members reasoned that their strike would force the Board of Control to yield to their demands.

During this period, the faculty majority took steps to make final arrangements for a seminary-in-exile. Although it is difficult to determine precisely when the formal plans for such a project were begun, there is evidence that the idea was being given consideration by both faculty members and student leaders in early fall of 1973. Administrators at both Eden Seminary and St. Louis University Divinity School were later to confirm that they had discussed such a possibility with Concordia officials well in advance of its February 20 formation. Two weeks before that event, a letter dated February 7, 1974, was written by Dr. Richard Caemmerer, secretary of the faculty, to Dr. Walter Wolbrecht, who had resigned from the Missouri Synod to become president of Lutheran School of Theology at Chicago, a seminary of the Lutheran Church in America (LCA). In the letter written on official Concordia Seminary stationery and posted on the Chicago school's bulletin board, Dr. Caemmerer stated:

Dear Pat:

Many thanks for the warm message to our president, faculty, and students from your seminary.

We are having trouble facing the reality of what transpires in these days. Fifty families are about to be cast adrift. Our plans for a seminary-in-exile, while serious, are awkward and improvised. We are grateful to you for your offer to help with accrediting our current graduates.

All of us appreciate sincerely your thought of us and assurance of support. As the weeks go on you may hear from us again. Only the Heavenly Father knows how to help us, and He will have to tell us what it is that He is trying to do in this disaster.

With the best personal greetings and good wishes,

Sincerely,

Richard R. Caemmerer Sr.

As was expected, the student leaders also cooperated fully with the Faculty Advisory Committee (in their role as "a corporate presidency") to present the plans of a seminary-in-exile to the students. At a student convocation

on February 6, the possibility of establishing a break-away school was publicly discussed before the student body for the first time. In the small group discussions that followed, the students were to discuss their thoughts and feelings about the moratorium as it related to plans for a seminary-in- exile. They were also to express whatever hopes, fears, concerns and questions would possibly be fostered by such a move.

That same evening, a rally was held at Christ Church Cathedral (Episcopal) in honor of the students who had returned from their nationwide "outreach." According to the February 7 **St. Louis Post-Dispatch**, Dr. Robert Bertram, spokesman for the Faculty Advisory Committee, announced "a five-point proposal to enable striking students at Concordia Seminary to complete winter and spring semester course work and receive accreditation." Dr. Bertram also pledged the faculty's efforts "to certify and place candidates as prospective pastors on May 1 and vicars or pastoral trainees on March 22."

Dr. Bertram disclosed that the faculty majority was "considering establishing a 'Concordia Seminary in Exile' to make possible the continued education of students who support the moderate faction of the faculty and administration." He also added that "the synod's Atlantic district, which includes New York City and upper New York state, had pledged \$50,000 to the project but that much more financial support would be needed."

Since February, 1974, supporters of the faculty majority have frequently claimed that the faculty majority were "thrown out" of the Seminary as the innocent victims of an impulsive action of the Board of Control. The facts — including the plans for a seminary-in-exile — compel a different conclusion.

## THE FACULTY'S ULTIMATUM [^](#)

To recapture the emotionalism of this period is difficult. Tempers sometimes ran short and discussions were often heated. Secular newspapers carried ominous headlines pointing to the bitter polarization that had developed within the Synod. A February 2, 1974 news article in the Portland **Oregonian** reported: "Majority Feel Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod Will Split Up." A Saturday, February 2, 1974 edition of the **Chicago Daily News** ran as its "Insight" headline: "A church divided — And dying? Conservative-moderate clash threatens to destroy Lutherans—Missouri Synod."

In spite of these "doomsday" prophecies from the secular press, meetings were being carried out at the highest synodical levels to seek some form of reconciliation at the St. Louis Seminary. The Council of Presidents met on February 8 and attempted to reach a resolution of the impasse at the Seminary. On February 10, the synodical Board of Directors met "to find a suitable way that would enable students to return to classes." It recommended that all parties meet as soon as possible to seek a possible

resolution to the immediate problems confronting the Synod. This "forum" met on February 15 and 16, 1974. However, it was evident that reconciliation could not be reached in so short a period of time, particularly in view of the continuing demands of representatives from the striking faculty.

Meanwhile, the distressing plans of the faculty majority for a seminary-in- exile were evidenced in a February 11, 1974 **St. Louis Post-Dispatch** article entitled "Dissenters Plan for Seminary." In the article, James Adams, **Post- Dispatch** religion editor, noted:

All preliminary arrangements — including tentative permission for Lutherans to worship in a Jesuit chapel — have been completed for "seminary-in-exile" for boycotting students and professors of Concordia Seminary.

Mr. Adams concluded that the turning point for the "seminary-in-exile" occurred after the Synod's Council of Presidents' meeting failed to generate any compromise proposals acceptable to dissenting faculty and students. The Rev. Samuel Roth, a St. Louis area pastor and president of ELIM, was quoted as saying, "We're really quite disappointed with the [Council of] Presidents' meeting." Although Roth acknowledged that there would be great financial difficulties facing the Seminex program, he stated: "It is clear from the faculty and student commitment that Seminex is no bluff."

Already in early February, the faculty majority had determined that it would not finish the academic year at Concordia Seminary, 801 De Mun, unless their demands were met. They were no longer willing to operate within the structure and polity of the Synod which had called them to serve, or to acknowledge and accept the authority of the duly elected synodical President and the Board of Control. They wanted the freedom to teach their own theological position and to run the Seminary their own way.

On February 12, the faculty issued an ultimatum to the Board of Control: they would return to Concordia's classrooms only if their demands were met. They wrote:

The Board of Control  
Concordia Seminary St.  
Louis, Missouri

Dear Brothers,

We of the Faculty Majority and Executive Staff of Concordia Seminary are determined to complete the theological education of the students, and so we are agreed that instruction will resume on Febuary 19, the day following your February meeting.

You can bring peace and unity back to our campus and return students and faculty to their customary classrooms and duties on that date. You can do these things by affirming that the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments are the written Word of God and the

only rule and norm of teaching and practice and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of the Word of God, by declaring that the Scriptures and the Confessions alone are the doctrinal basis of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and by recognizing that the Faculty Majority and Executive Staff teaches in accord with that doctrinal standard.

You can show your agreement with the above in a series of simple actions which it is in your power to take: reinstate John H. Tietjen as president together with the department heads whom you removed; issue a contract to Paul Goetting so that his teaching may continue at our institution; reverse the retirement policy announced in November and the retirements effected by your January action.

However, if positive steps are not taken to reverse the decisions of the past months, then on February 19 theological education, conducted by the Faculty Majority and Executive Staff, will begin again. We intend to remain loyal and responsible members of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. Our program of theological education will involve the same faculty and staff, the same student body, the same synodically-approved curriculum, and the same Lutheran Confessional commitment, but it will not be under your auspices and not at the customary location, until there is a satisfactory resolution of the issues facing us. Nevertheless instruction must and will resume, even while we await such a resolution.

Fraternally yours,

Andrew W. Weyermann

For The Faculty Majority and Executive Staff

Concordia Seminary

St. Louis, Missouri

The issue was clear: The faculty would carry out its called responsibilities only on its own terms, rather than on the basis of the Board's exercise of its constitutional responsibilities. In effect, the faculty's ultimatum meant nothing less than the assumption of Board authority by the faculty as a condition of continuation. The faculty majority ultimatum gave the Board until February 19 to comply with its demands. Since the Board (which consists of eleven men from all over the country who are engaged in various full-time positions) was not scheduled to meet until Sunday evening, February 17, the Board had only one day to consider the faculty majority's ultimatum and to make a decision.

Perhaps the most difficult demand of the faculty to decide in one day was to recognize "that the Faculty Majority and Executive Staff teaches in accord with that doctrinal standard." On February 9, 1974, the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters had adopted a ruling making it obligatory for the Board of Control to carry on an interview process and a study of the documentation with each of the more than forty members of the faculty

majority on all of the many complex doctrinal issues treated in Resolution 3-09 of the New Orleans convention.<sup>4</sup> From the standpoint of available time alone — not to mention more important considerations — it would have been physically impossible to accomplish that task before the February 19 deadline stated by the faculty majority in its February 12 ultimatum.

## THE FEBRUARY BOARD MEETING [^](#)

The Board of Control met on February 17-18, 1974, and immediately considered whether it would submit to the ultimatum of the faculty majority. Quite apart from its conclusion that the faculty's demands were impossible, it was the Board's firm conviction that the governing board of an institution cannot allow itself to be governed by an ultimatum from its faculty, nor should it be intimidated by the use of group pressure as represented in a faculty-student walkout or the threat to start a new institution if their demands were not met. However, in considering the ultimatum, the Board's major concern was the well-being of Concordia Seminary and the doctrinal position of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. It was committed to train young men for the ministry of the Lord Jesus Christ and to prepare them for a career as professional theologians and ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ on the basis of the Holy Scriptures.

While the Board was willing to listen to all sides involved, the Board remained aware of its responsibility to the Synod to keep the Seminary functioning as a school for ministerial training. This responsibility was of immediate importance to the Board, since vicarage assignments were to be made in March and candidate assignments in May. If the Seminary were to meet its obligations to the Synod, classes would have to be resumed at once.

It was clear to the Board that the faculty strike had damaged the ability of the Seminary to serve the mission and ministry of the Synod on several counts. The faculty majority had refused to honor their contractual

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<sup>4</sup>The complete text of this important CCM ruling is as follows:

1. Resolution 3-09 does not condemn the doctrinal position of the faculty as a whole and/or of each individual faculty member, but it does condemn the position defined as the stance of "the faculty majority."
2. Since Resolution 3-09 does not identify individuals by name, each individual faculty member is permitted to state that the positions rejected in Resolution 3-09 are not his personal positions and that therefore Resolution 3-09 does not apply to him.
3. In its second resolved Resolution 3-09 rejects both in a positive and in a negative way certain theological positions.
4. The CCM rules that under Resolution 3-09 the Board of Control is now obligated through an interview process and through a study of the documentation which has been developed to determine which faculty members hold positions rejected in Resolution 3-09 and to deal with them according to those procedures provided in Bylaw 6.79e et seq. which are pertinent.

obligations since January 21. In spite of this, they had been paid by the Synod on February 1, even though they had been on strike for several days. Some Board members felt that the careers of many students were being used as pawns in the faculty majority's opposition to Board action. This was particularly distressing to the Board in view of the fact that a sizeable portion of the student body wished classes to reconvene immediately.



Board members Rev. E.J. Otto (left) and Charles Burmeister ponder reporter's inquiries.

Since the faculty majority had refused to carry out its teaching responsibilities at the Seminary since January 21, the Board on February 17 had no other choice but to direct the faculty to return to their classes immediately and to resume the courses of instruction for which they had been called to teach at Concordia Seminary. The Board therefore directed all striking faculty members to signify their assent and agreement in writing to Acting President Scharlemann before noon the next day (February 18) and to resume their respective responsibilities and functions as employees under their contracts of employment on February 19. Board Chairman E.J. Otto commented to the Synod's radio station, KFUO, regarding this Board action:

We had the faculty majority letter of February 12 before us on Sunday night, the 17th, when the Board met. We viewed it for what it was, namely, an ultimatum. The letter said that if we did not rescind four previous Board actions, then on Tuesday, the 19th,

they would be teaching, but they would be teaching at another location and not under our auspices. Whatever else one might think of the letter, at least it had the merit of being clear and unambiguous English.

The Board's reaction was, "All right, we have two choices. One, we accede to these demands. We meet these requirements. In which case the faculty really will have taken over the function of the Board of Control. They would be setting the policies." The Board could have gone that route.

The other route would say, "No, we will not undo those actions. We are the Board of Control, you are faculty. We each have our sphere.

You stay in yours, we will stay in ours." That was the position we took as responsible servants of the church. We could not in good conscience bow to their ultimatum. Therefore, we in effect said to the faculty, "You will be in the classrooms on Tuesday the 19th. You already have not worked for a month. If you are not in the classrooms on Tuesday, you will have terminated your connection with the Seminary."

The faculty strike and the student "outreach," coupled with the threat of a seminary-in-exile if the Board of Control did not yield to the demands of the faculty majority the students, led the Board to its decision. Any faculty members refusing to resume their responsibilities on February 19 would be considered as having breached their contracts and terminated their employment by the Seminary.<sup>5</sup>

There was no response from the faculty by noon of February 18. Legally, the majority of faculty members had breached their contracts and terminated their employment; theologically, they had set aside their divine calls from The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod to teach at Concordia Seminary.

## THE STUDENT ASSOCIATION MEETING [^](#)

The headline in the Tuesday evening, February 19, edition of the **St. Louis Post-Dispatch** bore the grim tidings "Concordia Students Vote to Join 'Seminary-in-Exile.' " National television and radio newscasts devoted time to what was termed "the climax to the top religious news story of the past few years."

Even before the Student Association meeting convened the morning of February 19, the result was a foregone conclusion. The "spontaneity" of the walkout was a secret to no one, not even to the secular press. A **Post-Dispatch** news article stated:

The [student] leaders were so certain of the outcome that last night they planned an elaborate symbolic "funeral" for Concordia and a

<sup>5</sup>The actual text of the Board's resolution is included in this volume as Appendix I, pp.



protest march from the campus to St. Louis University, where the seminary-in-exile will begin tomorrow.

Moreover, when Dr. Herbert Mueller, Secretary of the Synod and a member of the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters (CCM), learned that plans were being readied for a student vote in preparation for the walkout, he offered to explain the issues from the Synodical perspective. Dr. Mueller was especially eager to explain the significance of the February 9 CCM ruling (see p. 115, footnote 4) which was addressed to the Board of Control to clarify the implementation of New Orleans Resolution 3-09 dealing with the doctrinal position of the faculty majority. He reasoned that the students might not understand that a way now existed to determine which teachers, if any, were guilty of false doctrine — an issue that disturbed many students. But his offer to speak was declined. The student leadership already had made their decision.



Students vote to "go into exile."

At 8:00 A.M., the meeting of the Student Association was held in the Seminary gymnasium. The single item on the agenda was whether the Student Association should or should not approve a proposed resolution to continue their theological education in exile. This was the resolution:

On January 21, 1974, students of Concordia Seminary declared a moratorium on all classes. We took this action in order to confront the crisis at our seminary and in our church. We declared to the Board of Control that the moratorium would remain in effect until either specific charges of false doctrine were brought against specific professors or those professors were exonerated. The Board

of Control has done neither. Instead, the contracts of our teachers have been terminated.

We believe this response of the Board of Control to be both unchristian and immoral. For this reason, we find it impossible in good conscience to continue our education under the present seminary Board of Control.

Instead, we will continue to pursue our calling as students in preparation for ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod under the terminated faculty. We believe they are innocent of any charges of false doctrine and, in fact, are faithful to the Holy Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions.

We therefore resolve to resume our theological education in exile, trusting in the grace of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Although there were a number of speakers who reported on the proposed plans for the operation of a seminary-in-exile, the major address was presented by Dr. Robert Bertram, chairman of the Faculty Advisory Committee. In his address, described as stirring and emotional, Dr. Bertram spoke of three options open to the students. The first two options were unthinkable in Bertram's opinion: either to stay at Concordia Seminary or to drop out altogether. If the students chose either of these two options, said Bertram, they along with the Board of Control would be guilty of "silencing the Word of God." They would be co-sponsors with the Board of Control of actions that were both "unchristian and immoral," as the student resolution stated. But there was a third option, Bertram exhorted, the students could "march into exile." After Bertram's address, the vote to "march into exile" was approved almost unanimously by those in attendance. David Strohschein, then a first-year seminarian, commented:

I attended the meeting which decided to go into exile. I knew it was another set up, for Dr. Herbert Mueller [Secretary of The Lutheran Church —Missouri Synod] had wanted to meet with students, but was told it was not necessary, only the pro-exile view was to be presented at this farcical meeting.

Throughout the faculty strike and, for that matter, throughout most of the school year, only the position of the faculty majority had been fairly presented to the student body. While they called for reconciliation and fraternal discussion, their own approach to hearing both sides left much to be desired.

## **EXODUS FROM CONCORDIA [▲](#)**

On the morning of February 19, 1974, shortly after the vote of the Student Association, the majority of faculty members and students made their exodus from Concordia Seminary and marched into a self-imposed exile. Dr. Carl Volz, a member of the faculty majority, gave this description of the walkout:

The students had arranged for each man to take a small wooden cross and write his name on it, and place it in the quad. The procession formed, with the faculty vested in academic garb to emphasize the fact that this was a peaceful and orderly protest, arranged by intellectual and reasonable men — not irresponsible radicals. The line moved up KFUE lane, and it was long. It was led by a crucifer and banners. As we entered the quad, hundreds of crosses were placed in the turf. We gathered at the Luther statue for the rites of exodus. Jones [Prof. Holland Jones] read from Jeremiah, Caemmerer [Dr. Richard Caemmerer] from Lamentations. After prayers and the Common Doxology, the bells rang out a dirge — the same dirge we heard at Piepkorn's death and funeral. But just as my wife said, "Why don't they ring something happy," the bells went into a 49-bell peal of joy. It was another moment of high drama, and again ... I wept. The students boarded up Walther Arch and wrote "Exiled" across the entrance. One thing I remember about all these actions — the bells. They were a part of our protest July 24th [after the synodical convention]. They rang out at Piepkorn's death. They rang out February 19th. They have not rung since. (Comments by Dr. Carl Volz, as recorded in **The Christian Century**, April 17, 1974, pp. 423-424)



Faculty and students participate in "funeral" of Concordia Seminary.

The February 19 **St. Louis Post-Dispatch** reported:

Despite bad weather today, students held a symbolic "funeral" for Concordia. Forty-eight crosses bearing the names of dismissed

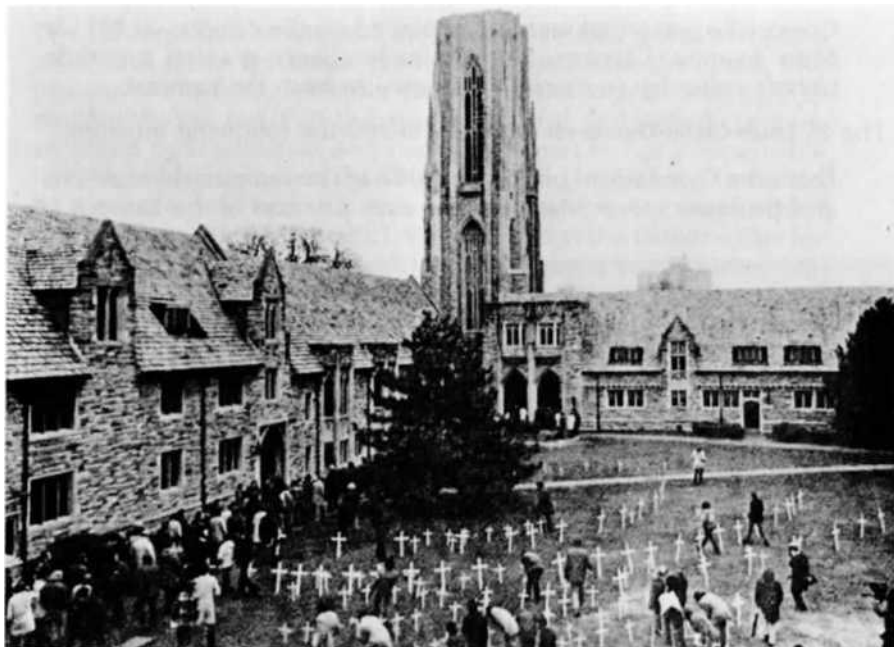
Concordia personnel were to be placed on the campus, at 801 De Mun Avenue, Clayton. Student leaders were granted a parade permit yesterday to march in procession from the campus.

The **St. Louis Globe-Democrat** article reported the following morning:

From the Gymnasium on the west side of the campus, the students and professors then marched to a park just east of the campus.



Students and wives plant crosses in Seminary Quadrangle. .



Departing "exiles" mark the "death" of the Seminary.

Along the way, they left signposts — small, wooden crucifixes bearing the names of students and professors planted in the seminary's quadrangle to give it the look of a graveyard.

The statue of Martin Luther which dominates the circular driveway in front of the quadrangle was draped with black crepe.

Two large plywood sheets, painted black with the word "EXILED" scrawled across them in white, blocked the arched entrance to the quadrangle.

As the crowd assembled briefly in front of the statue, the Rev. Dr. Richard Caemmerer, former faculty secretary, read aloud from the Bible about Moses "not being afraid of the king" and leading his people into exile.

The **Globe-Democrat** article also reported:

The crowd sang "Mighty Fortress" before filing in a procession to the De Mun Park east of the campus. The Rev. Dr. Walter Brueggemann, academic dean and professor of scripture at Eden Seminary, greeted the students and professors there.

Eden, a United Church of Christ institution, and the Roman Catholic St. Louis University will provide classroom space for the "Seminary in Exile," which begins classes Wednesday morning.

The "funeral" of Concordia Seminary and the "rite of exodus" received this comment from Mr. Hugh Fitz, then a first-year seminarian:

I wondered about the sanity of those who acted as they did, the crosses in the quad (obviously not a spontaneous move), the boarding up of the Walther Arch (with appropriate television and other reporters around), and the phoney march into exile for the sake of publicity. It was utterly ridiculous, and hard to believe.

It is also a fact that after the symbolic "march into exile" the vast majority of the students walked only to the De Mun Park bordering the Seminary campus, and then returned to the Seminary campus in order to eat lunch in the dining hall. Mr. Ted Mayes, then a second-year seminarian, commented:

I actually thought they had gone. Several of us began to pick up the



Students board up Walther Arch as the "march into exile" begins.



crosses that had been planted in the quad and place them over by the dining hall. Then we noted that a good number of the students had returned to eat lunch in the dining hall of the Seminary whose funeral they had just participated in. Several students came over to the place where the crosses had been put and tried to find their own individual ones.

In fact, for the remainder of the school year many of the students continued to use the dining hall facilities, the library facilities, and the field house for athletic purposes. Except for classes, you could hardly tell that they had gone.

The contradiction of a "spontaneous" walkout that was carefully planned in advance is obvious. The preparation of wooden crosses with the names of professors and students on them to be placed in the quad as a symbol of the "death" of Concordia Seminary, the presentations at the student body meeting in the morning, the Seminex resolution, and the refusal to permit Dr. Herbert Mueller to speak on behalf of the synodical administration—all bear witness to the fact that the walkout was a predetermined objective of the faculty majority and the student leaders.

In the typical "public pressure" style which the church had come to expect from Dr. Tietjen and the faculty majority, the well-planned and carefully orchestrated walkout took place in full view of the public media, newspaper reporters, and radio and television newscasters. They had been



TV cameramen record walkout ceremony at the base of Luther statue.





Dr. Tietjen addresses students at the base of Luther statue prior to walkout.



Dr. Tietjen addresses students in front of DeMun Park on the edge of the Seminary campus after students and faculty walked off the campus. Dr. Walter Brueggemann (center), Dean of Eden Theological Seminary (United Church of Christ) awaits opportunity to welcome former Concordia students into "exile."



11:50 A.M. Students and faculty march off Concordia campus into "exile" after conducting the Seminary's "funeral."



12:10 P.M. "Exiled" students and faculty return to campus to eat lunch in the Seminary cafeteria.

informed in advance about the planned walkout and were present throughout the proceedings. The walkout made headlines across the country and even prompted a remark by Walter Cronkite on the CBS Evening News. However, Mr. Cronkite seemed more interested in the fact that Lutheran seminarians would be studying at a Jesuit (Roman Catholic) seminary than with the doctrinal struggle within the Missouri Synod.

On the next day, February 20, those who had left formed a seminary in opposition to Concordia Seminary and the theological education program of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod. Seminex, as the so-called seminary-in-exile was known, was housed in facilities made available by Eden Seminary (United Church of Christ) and St. Louis University Divinity School (Roman Catholic). These institutions also provided an academic structure for Seminex known as the "Joint Project for Theological Education." Additional support, including academic degrees a few months later, came from Lutheran School of Theology in Chicago, a seminary of the Lutheran Church in America. For weeks — and even years — the people of Seminex described their exodus from Concordia in terms of martyrdom and exile. However, from the perspective of those who remained at Concordia to serve The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod the exodus is more accurately described in terms of rebellion — and great sadness.

## IX

### DEALING WITH EXILES [^](#)

The Board of Control and the Seminary faculty members immediately began the rebuilding of Concordia Seminary. Ninety percent of the faculty and eighty-five percent of the students were gone. Though its "funeral" had been observed, the school continued to function. The Seminary's programs were all continued, but under the most adverse circumstances. Many files, student records, and other items had disappeared from the Seminary campus. Qualified men to fill the teaching posts had to be interviewed and called. Since the student body in the Spring Quarter of 1974 numbered just over one hundred, plans for student recruitment needed to be implemented immediately. The Seminary's accreditation with the American Association of Theological Schools (AATS) was in doubt. Moreover, the loss of so many students meant a steep reduction in financial resources. However, with the help of God and the extra efforts of many faculty members, staff, and students, Concordia Seminary finished the 1973-1974 school year and granted thirty-seven Master of Divinity degrees to qualified candidates for the pastoral ministry on May 24, 1974.



Acting President Dr. Martin Scharlemann conducts chapel for students after the walkout. Also visible at the far right is faculty member Dr. Richard Klann.

### FORMER FACULTY AND SEMINARY HOUSING [^](#)

Since the members of the faculty majority (hereafter referred to as the "former faculty") chose to terminate their own contracts of employment on February 19, 1974, the Board resolved, "No such member of the faculty

who is housed in any of the Seminary-owned homes shall be provided with such housing subsequent to February 28, 1974." For legal reasons, this resolution was necessary to establish the principle that the Seminary was not obligated to provide its former employees with continued remuneration in the form of housing. However, the Board immediately acted to show its concern for the well-being of the professors and their families by offering to extend housing privileges until the end of March, 1974. Further extensions were granted to those former faculty members who felt they were unable to meet the March 31 deadline. Published reports to the contrary, no member of the former faculty was evicted from Seminary-owned housing. As a matter of fact, the Board continued to allow former faculty member to remain in Seminary-owned housing rent free for several months, with one former faculty member remaining until September 1.<sup>1</sup>

Realizing the difficulty involved in obtaining dormitory or apartment space elsewhere, the Board was also considerate in its treatment of the walkout students. In order to provide adequate time for those students to seek suitable housing the Board resolved:

Students of Concordia Seminary who do not register for the Spring quarter will be permitted to remain in their off-campus Seminary- owned housing until at least April 30, 1974. It will be presented to the Board at its March meeting whether to permit them to continue to use such housing after that time. Only students who do register for the Spring quarter will be permitted to continue to live in the dormitories.

## **RECONCILIATION EFFORTS [^](#)**

The Board of Control participated in all reconciliation efforts initiated by the Synod's Board of Directors, both before and after the walkout. In addition, the Board itself took the lead in seeking to arrange discussions with the former faculty and availed itself of every opportunity to participate in efforts to reach a meaningful reconciliation. This was done in spite of the strongly worded condemnations of the actions of the Board and administration which continued to come from former faculty members and students.

In early March, 1974, the executive committee of the Synod's Board of Directors prepared written guidelines incorporating suggestions made by experienced mediators for discussions between the Board and the former faculty. The committee met with Board of Control representatives and presented the proposed guidelines, together with the name of a proposed mediator. Both were accepted by the Board of Control representatives.

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<sup>1</sup> Cumulative figures reveal that the Seminary provided twenty-two faculty members with fifty-one months of rent free housing after March 1. Based on the then current housing allowance, such housing had a cash value of \$11,220.

When the committee met with representatives of the former faculty in an eight-hour meeting, the latter presented concerns which resulted in some changes in the guidelines. Because the Board was willing to begin fraternal discussions as soon as possible, it accepted them along with a proposal to begin the discussions on March 25, 1974. However, the representatives of the former faculty indicated that they did not have the authority to approve the guidelines or the agreed upon date, but had to seek the approval of the entire former faculty.

Nearly one week later, on March 19, 1974, representatives of the former faculty contacted the executive committee of the Synod's Board of Directors and stated that they did not agree with the proposed guidelines but that they would reconsider them the following week. The delay of the former faculty made it impossible to hold the discussions scheduled for March 25, 1974. On the following day, the executive committee of the Board of Directors met for the third time with representatives of the former faculty in order to hear their complaints about the guidelines. At that meeting, the former faculty insisted that all of their concerns must be satisfied in order for fraternal discussions to begin. On that account, the executive committee agreed to reconsider the guidelines and to seek the consent of the Board of Control. Just three days later, on March 29, the executive committee revised the proposed guidelines, communicated them to the former faculty, and asked for an early meeting. When the former faculty did not respond to the executive committee's invitation, that committee invited a representative of the former faculty to meet with them on April 5, 1974.

For the April 5 meeting, the executive committee again re-drafted the proposed guidelines in an attempt to make them acceptable to the former faculty. When the executive committee met with representatives of the Board of Control, the Board again concurred with the revised guidelines. However, when the committee met with former faculty members, they offered further objections to the guidelines. After a member of the executive committee pointed out that the guidelines were essentially those used by the major mediation societies throughout the world and that time was of the essence since the Board of Control was faced with the necessity of filling faculty positions, the former faculty representatives again indicated, as they had a month earlier, that they did not have the authority to accept the guidelines. Since the Seminex spring recess was scheduled for the following week, they did not know just when they would be ready to consider the latest executive committee proposal.

On April 9, 1974, the executive committee extended to the former faculty an invitation to meet with the committee on April 19. At that meeting, a representative of the former faculty advised the executive committee that they had not fully considered the latest proposal of the committee and had not taken it to the full faculty. It was their opinion that a meeting at that time

would not be productive. The executive committee stressed again the urgency of beginning the fraternal discussions as soon as possible.

At the Board of Control's April 21-22, 1974, meeting, various interviews were conducted by the Board for possible faculty appointments. Since members of the former faculty appeared to be unwilling to meet with representatives of the Board in order to discuss possible re-employment at Concordia Seminary, the Board felt that it had to initiate the process of identifying qualified and experienced men for possible calls to teach at the Seminary. Even so, the Board declined to fill its vacancies in April, preferring to continue the effort to arrange discussions with the former faculty for another month.

On May 2, 1974, the executive committee of the Synod's Board of Directors met with the representatives of the former faculty for the fifth time. After much discussion, it was decided that since the former faculty would not agree to the guidelines for fraternal discussions, an initial meeting would be held with a mutually agreed upon mediator to discuss the objectives and procedures for fraternal discussions. As a result, the executive committee, in their "General Guidelines for Fraternal Discussion" wrote:

A mutually-agreed-upon mediator will convene an initial meeting for the purpose of discussing objectives and procedures for these fraternal discussions. The following have been invited to participate in this initial meeting: the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors and its Chairman J.A.O. Preus, representatives of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, and representatives of the faculty and student body of the Joint Project for Theological Education (Seminex).

Several days later, the Board for Higher Education sent the following communication to the respective Boards of Control of Concordia Theological Seminary, Springfield, and Concordia Seminary, St. Louis:

In filling faculty positions we ask you to give serious consideration to the former faculty members of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis (Seminex), for faculty appointments in accordance with the Bylaw provisions 6.53.

The Board for Higher Education believes that there are among those former faculty members those who can be of valuable service to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

On May 17, 1974, the Synod's Commission on Constitutional Matters had issued a statement on the applicability of its February 9, 1974, opinion (dealing with New Orleans Resolution 3-09 and the doctrinal position of the faculty majority) to the former faculty majority, now that they were no longer under the supervision of the Board of Control. The CCM stated:

Even though the language of Resolution 3-09 seems to be confusing at times, the Commission, which has already ruled earlier on Resolution 3-09, would state once again that the Synod has the right

to adopt doctrinal resolutions and in such resolutions to reject certain doctrinal positions.

Resolution 3-09 rejects what has been referred to as a "faculty majority position." It is the responsibility of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to determine which individuals fall under the judgment of Resolution 3-09 and what kind of action needs to be taken. Beyond that point, avenues of appeal are still available to those to whom the judgment of the resolution may be applied. Resolution 3-09 therefore does not do violence to the Constitution and Bylaws of the Synod. Its implementation, however, has been made difficult, perhaps even impossible, by the withdrawal of most faculty members.

The Board of Control understood this explanation to mean that doctrinal interviews on the basis of Resolution 3-09 would have to be a part of any effort to re-engage former faculty members. Recognizing that honest reconciliation must be based on the resolution of the doctrinal issues which had created the problems at the Seminary and in the Synod, the Board resolved:

The Board of Control concurs with the interpretation, ruling and opinion of the Commission on Constitutional Matters concerning New Orleans Resolution 3-09.

In response to the communications from the Synod's Board for Higher Education, the Board of Directors, Executive Committee, and the CCM, the Board of Control, in its meeting of May 20, 1974, decided to take the initiative, and resolved:

to implement the recommendation of the Board for Higher Education, and that the Board of Control begin such implementation by carrying on appropriate inquiries and conversations with former faculty members. We believe such a direct approach will make a meaningful contribution to the goal of reconciliation.

At the same meeting, the Board named Dr. Ralph Bohlmann as the Acting President of the Seminary. Dr. Bohlmann, a member of the faculty since 1960 and one of the five minority professors, was at that time on leave of absence from the Seminary and serving as the executive secretary of the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations. The acting presidency had been vacant since mid-April when nervous exhaustion forced Dr. Martin Scharlemann to resign. During the interim between his resignation and Dr. Bohlmann's appointment, the direction of the Seminary had been in the hands of Vice-president Robert Preus, who was elected President of Concordia Theological Seminary in Springfield, Illinois, on May 24, 1974.

In its May, 1974, meeting, the Board of Control also extended calls to a number of the men it had interviewed in its April meeting. With accreditation and recruitment problems, and with a new school year only a



few months away, the Board could no longer wait for the outcome of possible discussions with the Seminex faculty — especially since they had demonstrated so little interest in reconciliation after their exodus from Concordia.

A committee of the Board immediately arranged discussions with representatives of the Seminex faculty to explore their interest in doctrinal discussion and possible re-engagement at Concordia. The first of these meetings, held on May 29, 1974, was strained but cordial, and resulted in plans to hold further meetings. The Board was therefore disappointed by the letter it received from the Seminex faculty dated June 5, 1974, particularly when that letter was widely disseminated throughout the Synod a few days later. In that letter, the Seminex faculty distorted and misrepresented the Board's reconciliation efforts. But the Seminex faculty letter did make one thing clear: they were no longer under the supervision of the Board of Control. They wrote:

For one thing, we are no longer under your supervision. You made that clear when you terminated our employment. Ever since then, as you yourselves have said, you have no official responsibility for us and for what we teach. True, the New Orleans convention did ask you to implement its doctrinal charges against us. But that, of course, was back in the days when you were still our board of control.

Another important point in the Seminex faculty letter was its reaffirmation of its previous doctrinal position. They wrote: "Another good reason against the interviews is that you already have all the information about our doctrine that you could possibly need;" and continued, "What we believe, teach and confess, both as individuals and as a faculty, we have published and spoken again and again for all to hear;" and specifically pointed out, "Take for instance, our two booklets, **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord**, Volumes I and II." They concluded:

So we beg you do not ask again, "Yes, but whose teaching is that?" It is ours. If after that you still insist on condemning the teaching, then please accept the responsibility of condemning us as well.

The Seminex faculty letter also stated their reasons for declining further interviews on the basis of Resolution 3-09:

Our chief reason, however, for declining your interviews is a confessional reason ... that problem, as thousands in our Synod are coming to recognize, is that the Word of God is being silenced. It is being silenced by legalism. ... It is that kind of official silencing of the Word, we are saying, which is upon us now. ... But what we still can do is to cry out against that legalism, to try once more to unsilence the Word, so long as God gives us the freedom to do so. It is this creeping legalism in high places against which we are trying to take a stand.

A puzzling feature of the letter was its suggestion to follow the earlier proposal of the Executive Committee of the Board of Directors, for those efforts had bogged down only because of the delays and objections of the Seminex faculty members for more than three months. Unfortunately, one thing was very clear: the Seminex faculty in June, 1974, was still determined to distort the motives of others, to insist on its own way, and to use publicity as a "public pressure" tactic.

In spite of the Seminex faculty's rebuff of its reconciliation efforts, the June, 1974, Board meeting encouraged continued committee discussions with Seminex representatives. As a result of these efforts, two meetings of all involved parties, including synodical officials, were held in October. Known as the "Committee of Twenty," these meetings were discontinued when Seminex representatives refused further meetings except on their own terms. In its June meeting, the Board also instructed its administrative officers to initiate correspondence between the Board and former faculty members. As a result, letters were sent to individual Seminex faculty members to determine whether any of them might be interested in being considered by the Board of Control for faculty appointments. Not one member of the Seminex faculty indicated any interest in this offer. In fact, an official letter from the Academic Dean flatly rejected it on behalf of the entire Seminex faculty.

## JUDGMENTAL LANGUAGE [^](#)

The former faculty and students who formed Seminex frequently employed judgmental language against synodical officials and Concordia Seminary's Board of Control and administration. The Board was accused of "silencing the Word of God," "raw legalism," "evil," "injustice," and "immorality." In letters, resolutions, and public statements, Seminex personnel repeatedly invoked the "judgment of God" upon Concordia Seminary.

Although strong language had characterized many of the statements of the former faculty throughout the controversy ("unLutheran," "garbage in, garbage out," "legalistic," "ungodly," "collusion," "charade," "unethical," etc.), the public use of such accusatory language became particularly pronounced after Dr. Tiejen's public announcement on the day after his suspension as President of Concordia Seminary. In that statement he referred to various actions and members of the synodical administration and Board of Control as being "immoral," "hopelessly corrupt," and "morally bankrupt." The same type of language continued when Dr. Robert Bertram, in his speech to the student body on the day of the walkout, judged the Board of Control guilty of "silencing the Word of God" and of actions which were "both unchristian and immoral." In an official document dated February 19, 1974 and sent to the members of the Synod, the former faculty explained:

We cannot return to our classes and pretend that we have business as usual, even though we would like to. We wish we could remain in our offices and continue to teach in the classrooms at 801 De Mun.

What makes it impossible? The synodical administration and seminary Board of Control are silencing the Word of God, stifling the Biblical Gospel. That Scriptural Gospel, which is the heart and focus of our Synod's teaching and the well-spring of fraternal and evangelical actions and relationships, is under siege and is being crushed into silence.

The student resolution to form a break-away seminary also employed the latter terms.

We believe this response of the Board of Control to be both unchristian and immoral. For this reason, we find it impossible in good conscience to continue our education under the present seminary Board of Control.

Later, the Seminex position of invocation of the "judgment of God" against Concordia Seminary was clarified in a document entitled: "Some Thoughts for in-house Discussion of Seminex's Word of Judgment on 801." The Seminex community wrote:

But we do not make a similar penitential confession for our judgment of 801's silencing. That judgment stands as objectively valid apart from us. It is God's own verdict upon 801's action. He says: You are silencing what I want publicized. We cannot "take back" that criticism.

Rather in our better moments — when we are more thoughtful, faith-ful, and caring — we shudder, for God's Word of judgment does not come back void. And the public policy of the denomination **He** is condemning is the policy of **our** LC-MS.

The same document even accused the Board of Control and the Seminary administration of departure from the Gospel itself:

When 801 excises us from their fellowship precisely because of our urging this gospel-normed, gospel-rooted Word of God, we can only conclude that they have an "other" gospel (we earlier called it "legalism made public church policy") operating in, with, and under (but actually clean contrary to) **the** gospel.

In conclusion, the Seminex document declared: "For the sake of our brotherhood we want to make this clear. God's judgment on false gospels never changes."

On May 20, 1974, a Seminex resolution pertaining to certification efforts for 1974 graduates had this to say about Concordia Seminary:

**Whereas**, on February 19, 1974 we declared that we could no longer in good conscience continue our education under the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, 801 DeMun, because of the unjust

and unloving way in which it dealt with the former "faculty majority," and **Whereas**, to date no serious effort has been made either by Concordia Seminary, 801 DeMun, or by the synodical administration which supports Concordia Seminary, 801 DeMun, to put an end to this injustice, therefore be it

**Resolved**, that until this injustice has been rectified we will continue to speak a strong word of judgment against Concordia Seminary, 801 DeMun, and the synodical administration which supports it, and will not allow that word of judgment to be silenced.

On May 22, 1974, the Seminex faculty released to pastors throughout the Synod a letter regarding the certification proposal for pastoral candidates by the Concordia Seminary faculty and the Council of Presidents. This letter spoke of Concordia Seminary as "that very institution which condemned the confessional stand of the students and faculty and their legitimate requests," claimed that the certification proposal "asked them to silence the word of God's judgment they had proclaimed," and questioned whether the Concordia Seminary faculty "would act in complete good faith." Accordingly, the letter explained that Seminex candidates would "offer themselves directly to the congregations and agencies of the church for ordination and call," thus bypassing the Synod's official procedures for certification of pastoral candidates by a Seminary faculty and official placement by the Council of Presidents.

That such language was not simply the thoughtless and largely empty rhetoric of emotionally charged people becomes painfully clear when one realizes that the official Seminex catalog for the 1975-76 school year continued this accusatory posture with the following statement:

Concordia Seminary in Exile is a reality because nearly all its faculty and students were forced to continue their educational tasks in exile. It is a present necessity because the administration of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and of Concordia Seminary is attempting to silence the Word of God by imposing a confessional standard other than the Scriptures and the Lutheran Symbols in which the Gospel is not the final word.

Typical of the strong accusations and pressures brought to bear on students during this period by Seminex personnel was a letter dated March 21, 1974, from a former faculty member to a student who decided to continue his education for the Holy Ministry at Concordia Seminary.

Dear [student] —

I just found out by looking at the lists that you were not with us at Seminex (i.e., I finally got my grades in for the last quarter). In my usual facetious manner I'll be inclined to say: See II Cor. 6:14c.

But seriously I do wish we might have talked during or after the rumble. Just today I finished a tutorial with [a student]. We were

doing FC. X on adiaphoron, and the talk got around to "registering at 801"=adiaphoron. But if "registering at 801" is now linked to a confessional commitment to a Judaizing "other" Gospel, then it is no longer adiaphoron, but is itself "taking a stand" with that "other" Gospel **against** the truth of THE gospel.

I suppose that you have tho't it all thru and come to alternate conclusions. If so, I'd like to hear you out and see how you get from Book of Concord theology to your own present stance.

You've heard me shoot off my mouth frequently, but I can only remember that one time you opened up and revealed yourself. I wish now that we'd had more of the latter and less of the former. Can we still make up on that?

Faternally Yours,

— — —

Is it true that the Board of Control "silenced the Word of God"? Literally speaking, of course, no man can do that. But this Seminex charge appears to mean that the Board of Control removed faculty men from their positions. However, prior to the faculty walkout on February 19, no member of the faculty had been fired or removed from his office. Only President John Tietjen had been suspended temporarily from his position until further investigation of the matter could be conducted. Moreover, the President of the Synod, the Board of Directors of the Synod, the Commission on Constitutional Matters, the Board for Higher Education, and the Board of Control repeatedly urged the faculty majority to return to their classrooms. The faculty refused to do so. It was **their** decision not to remain at Concordia Seminary. If anyone was guilty of "silencing the Word of God" (to use that terminology), the faculty majority must bear the burden of their own argument, since they chose to walk out on their own volition.

The Seminex pronouncement of God's judgment upon Concordia Seminary and the synodical administration remains a major barrier on the road toward reconciliation. It explains, in part, why relationships between Concordia Seminary and Seminex have been so difficult. For there is nothing worse that a person can say to his brother. On June 5, 1974, the Seminex faculty wrote the Board of Control, "If you and President Preus, on the one hand, and we at Seminex, on the other, begin to talk with one another as brothers, we might just provide an example." These were strange words at the time, especially in view of the harsh accusations from Seminex and in view of the Seminex reluctance to cooperate in the numerous efforts at reconciliation. But they correctly underscore the need "to talk with one another as brothers," and brothers do not allow the word of God's judgment to be their final word to one another.

## THE CONCORDIA SEMINARY NAME [^](#)

In June, 1974, Seminex was officially incorporated in the State of Missouri under the name "Concordia Seminary in Exile." The Seminary's legal counsel has consistently advised that the name "Concordia Seminary" is the rightful possession of Concordia Seminary and of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, and that its use by Seminex is improper. The Board has been concerned that continued use of the Concordia Seminary name by Seminex will cause confusion in the mind of the general public, contribute to the misdirection of gifts intended for Concordia Seminary, and inflict other damages on the Seminary.

However, rather than seek an injunction against further illegal use of the name, the Board of Control has endeavored to dissuade Seminex from further use of the name through letters, personal appeals, and the persuasive efforts of the synodical Board of Directors. Although the 1975 synodical convention authorized stronger action (in Resolution 6-06, 1975 **Convention Proceedings**, p. 144), the Board continues to hope that Seminex will spare the Synod the need for such action by voluntarily changing its official name. There is, of course, more to this matter than the legal question of proper nomenclature. The Seminex use of the Concordia Seminary name illustrates the deeper identity problem that is involved. Seminex faculty, students, and supporters have frequently advanced the claim that Seminex is the "genuine" Concordia Seminary, with only the physical facilities remaining at 801 De Mun in Clayton, Missouri. For example, the worship folder for the opening service at Seminex in September, 1974, claimed that the service was for the 136th year of "Concordia Seminary, Now in Exile." It is also clear that the Seminex claim to be the real Concordia Seminary underlies the attitude and actions of several Seminex persons toward the use of the property and facilities of Concordia Seminary.

The Seminex misuse of the Concordia Seminary name and identity, like their pronouncements of God's judgment, has been a negative factor in relationships between the institutions since the 1974 walkout.

## THE BOARD OF CONTROL AND DR. TIETJEN [^](#)

At the time of Dr. Tietjen's temporary suspension on January 20, 1974, he stated in a January 21 news release that he would not participate further in the synodically prescribed procedures for adjudicating his case. He reiterated this stand in his April 17, 1974 refusal to give "response, comments, and questions" to the Board of Control's formulation of the doctrinal questions at issue in the charges against him. The Board had spent several sessions and many hours of study in formulating these doctrinal questions which needed to be presented to the Synod's Commission on Theology and Church Relations (CTCR) in accordance with the provisions of Bylaw 6.79d and e. Dr. Tietjen further declined an invitation from the

Faculty Hearings Committee to participate in a hearing of his case on August 30, 1974.<sup>2</sup>

In the meantime, Dr. Tietjen traveled to various parts of the country, presenting his case to groups of laymen and pastors and using the public media in order to publicize his side of the story. In the March 30, 1974, **Detroit News** he stated, "Lay-people don't want the kind of church we have with the spirit of oppression, repression, and injustice." At a luncheon meeting in Detroit, Dr. Tietjen also told a group of Lutheran business men that the church did not want the kind of man who would graduate from Concordia Seminary, but rather needed the kind of men who would graduate from Seminex. He made similar comments and judgments in Milwaukee, Omaha, Chicago, and Cleveland.

Perhaps the most scathing indictment of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod to come from Dr. Tietjen throughout the long controversy appeared in his sermon address to the ELIM assembly at Chicago in late August, 1974. According to **Time**, September 9, 1974, Dr. Tietjen stated:

The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod we have known is dead.

The institution that has given us life is no more. Its structures are hopelessly corrupt. Its leadership is morally bankrupt. Its rank-and- file members have chosen to ignore and overlook evil.

With the CTCR advisory opinion and the Faculty Hearings Committee report in hand, together with all pertinent evidence, the Board of Control on September 16, 1974, resolved that on October 11-12, 1974, it would hold a hearing with Dr. Tietjen as specified in Bylaw 6.79j. To this hearing, the Board invited Pastors Buelow and Harnapp, as well as Dr. Tietjen, together with their legal counsel if desired.

In spite of Dr. Tietjen's previous statements that he would not participate in the further steps of the procedure, and in spite of his rejections of invitations to present, explain, and defend his doctrinal position and administrative actions, he was informed of the October 11-12 meeting and was invited to participate. In response to the Board of Control Chairman's September 26 letter of invitation, Dr. Tietjen, in a letter of October 3, stated that he would not be present for the hearing. This time, however, he did not refer to his January 21 refusal to participate in the procedures, but pleaded "parental responsibilities." Inquiry by the Chairman as to the nature of these responsibilities brought the response from Dr. Tietjen that he planned to spend the October 11-12 weekend with his daughter who was attending college in Northfield, Minnesota.

Because the January 20 Board of Control action had involved only the

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<sup>2</sup> An impartial judicial expert had been engaged by the Board of Control to conduct this hearing, so that Dr. Tietjen could be assured of having every opportunity for a fair and objective presentation and argumentation of his case.

temporary suspension of Dr. Tietjen, he remained under Board of Control jurisdiction and continued to receive full salary and other benefits, including full housing and pension, even though no duties were required of him after January 20. In view of the reasons given and in the light of his previous statements about non-participation, the Board of Control felt there was no valid reason for the postponement of the hearing.

At the Board's October 11-12 meeting, the Chairman reported on his correspondence and phone conversation with Dr. Tietjen relative to the latter's refusal to adjust his personal schedule so that he might be present. The ensuing discussion included legal counsel's opinion that the meeting could proceed. Read into the record were Dr. Tietjen's statement of January 21 that he would not participate further in the procedure of Bylaw 6.79, his April 17 refusal to participate in the Board's formulation of the doctrinal questions at issue for the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, and his August 14 refusal to meet with the Faculty Hearings Committee. The Board resolved to continue the hearing and permitted Pastors Leonard Buelow and Harlan Harnapp to appear, together with their theological and legal counsels, as provided in synodical Bylaw 6.79j. In view of Dr. Tietjen's absence from the hearing, Dr. Richard Caemmerer was invited to appear on Dr. Tietjen's behalf at the Saturday morning, October 12, session. Dr. Caemmerer offered the Board his opinion on Dr. Tietjen's theological position, the document **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord**, Part I, the inspiration of Scripture, and the doctrines in dispute as listed in New Orleans Resolution 3-09. In response to questions, Dr. Caemmerer stated that he had not read any of the documents involved in the case, namely, the charges, the supporting evidence, the CTCR advisory opinion, and the Faculty Hearings Committee report.<sup>3</sup>

After Dr. Caemmerer was excused with thanks, the Board entered into a lengthy discussion of various facets of the charges and the evidence. Documents and doctrines which were discussed included **Faithful to Our Calling, Faithful to Our Lord**, Part I and Part II, together with the CTCR evaluation of their inadequacies, the inspiration of Scripture, the historical-critical method of Biblical interpretation, Dr. Tietjen's essay given at the Atlantic District convention, June 14, 1970, and the document "Data on Theological Differences Within the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis" (which had been submitted to the Board by the faculty minority in 1971).

Following a resolution that "debate and suggestions" be closed, the Board voted by ballot on the charges. The Board found that the charges of which

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<sup>3</sup> The CTCR theological opinion and the Faculty Hearings Committee report have not been released because of their possible relevance to the continuing question of Dr. Tietjen's clergy membership in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.



Dr. Tietjen was found guilty constituted adequate cause for removal and dismissal as President and member of the faculty, effective October 12, 1974. Additional resolutions provided a gratuity in an amount equivalent to salary to November 15, 1974; housing to December 31, 1974; and proper notification to Dr. Tietjen of the Board's decision.

The next day Dr. Tietjen released a statement to the Seminex community and subsequently to the media. In it he listed the charges of which he had been found guilty. He stated:

I was notified yesterday that at a meeting on October 12, 1974, the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, removed and dismissed me as president and as a member of the faculty, effective the date of the meeting, as a result of having found me guilty of the following charges made against me by the Rev. L.P. Buelow and the Rev. H.L. Harnapp:

1. Holding and defending, allowing and fostering false doctrine contrary to Article II of the Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.
2. You rendered yourself unable to mediate and settle doctrinal disagreements within the faculty.
3. You were administratively irresponsible.
4. You presumptuously and wrongfully assumed Board of Control duties and prerogatives.
5. You on occasion intimidated Board of Control members.
6. You did not deal in a Christian manner with faculty members.
7. You demeaned the office of the Synodical President and defied the executive authority thereof.
8. You opposed the Synodical President in his efforts to resolve the doctrinal problems at the Seminary.
9. You were insubordinate to the authority of the Board of Higher Education.
10. You failed to maintain careful watch over the spiritual welfare, personal life and conduct of the student body.

In stating that the Board of Control's action was no surprise to him, Dr. Tietjen accused the Board of Control of showing contempt for due process provisions incorporated in the Bylaws dealing with removal from office. In citing Bylaw 6.79j, Dr. Tietjen said that the Board could not render a decision without having given the accused a personal hearing (while neglecting to mention why he decided not to attend!). In stating that he would not appeal the decision, he continued his judgment that "the structures of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod have become hopelessly corrupt" and that "the leadership of the present synodical administration is morally bankrupt."

As early as January 21, 1974, the Board of Control reminded the members of the student body that the synodical certification procedure for endorsing candidates for the Holy Ministry would stay in effect in spite of their boycott of classes. Briefly stated, the Synod's certification process recognizes that, according to the Scriptures and the Lutheran Confessions, the individual congregation has the right and responsibility to call and ordain a qualified person to serve as its pastor. It is nevertheless understood that when a congregation joins The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod it voluntarily agrees to call as its pastors only such men who have been officially endorsed by one of the two Seminary faculties or the Colloquy Board, and who thereby are listed on the Synod's official clergy roster. Candidates for the Holy Ministry receive their first calls through the Council of Presidents, which acts as a Board of Assignments for graduates from the Synod's seminaries and those who have fulfilled the requirements by colloquy.

After the walkout, Seminex officials demanded that the Synod's certification process be altered to include the graduates of Seminex as qualified for ordination in the Missouri Synod. At its March 17-18, 1974 meeting, the Board of Control cautioned the Council of Presidents against altering certification procedures set forth in the Synod's Constitution and Bylaws without proper authorization from a synodical convention.

At its March meeting, the Council of Presidents considered the problem posed by certification and endorsement of Seminex students. Although no decision was reached on candidate assignments, the Council did assign all second-year seminarians, including Seminex students, to vicarages. This was done with the stipulation that supervision be provided by the Synod's Board for Higher Education and that all second-year students at Seminex receive a passing grade from Concordia Seminary (801) for the Winter Quarter to fulfill the academic requirements for vicarage. The Seminex students responded by rejecting the passing grade offered by Concordia Seminary for the Winter Quarter and stated that they regarded Seminex certification and supervision as sufficient. Nevertheless, their vicarage assignments were allowed to stand.

The problem of candidate certification proved to be more difficult. Because the walkout had created a special situation, the Council of Presidents conducted numerous meetings in the winter and spring of 1974 to address themselves to the questions posed for proper certification and endorsement of Seminex graduates. Although a few District Presidents publicly announced that they would ordain and install Seminex graduates no matter what the Council decided, the majority of District Presidents were mindful of their responsibilities as officers of the Synod and therefore continued to uphold its Constitution and Bylaws in this matter.

The small and struggling faculty of Concordia Seminary was also interested in their former students at Seminex, and felt great concern that many young

men might have jeopardized their ministerial careers by withdrawing from the Seminary before it could certify them for the ministry. Accordingly, on April 25, 1974 — one week before the Council of Presidents was to meet, the faculty adopted a proposal whereby the faculty would certify those 1974 Seminex graduates who passed a careful theological examination given by the Seminary. The faculty hoped to share the proposal with the Council of Presidents and Board for Higher Education before implementing it.

In the meantime, the Council of Presidents conducted two meetings in May to resolve the problem. As a result of their initial meeting, a proposal was developed and then modified by the Concordia Seminary faculty to include an interview process. After approval by the Board of Control and the Board for Higher Education, the proposal was given to the Seminex seniors. Drs. Robert Preus and Ralph Bohlmann personally met with class leaders to explain that a schedule of interviews had been conceived whereby the Concordia Seminary faculty could process the entire Seminex senior class by holding half-hour interviews over the Mother's Day weekend and into Tuesday of the following week. The Council of Presidents, in the meantime, had also urged Seminex pastoral candidates to cooperate with the interview process. At the same time, the Council encouraged the Concordia Seminary Board of Control to deal with the issues which had precipitated the Seminex walkout from the Concordia campus.

In spite of the long hours spent by the faculty and Council of Presidents to reach a suitable compromise, the Seminex seniors immediately rejected the proposal. In a resolution accusing the Board of Control of being "unjust and unloving," the students promised:

that until this injustice has been rectified we will continue to speak a strong word of judgment against Concordia Seminary, 801 De Mun, and the synodical administration which supports it, and will not allow that word of judgment to be silenced.

In a resolution adopted May 21, 1974, the Seminex seniors stated that they intended to go outside of the proper synodical procedure for endorsement by an official Seminary faculty and placement by the Council of Presidents. The Seminex class resolved:

that we communicate our willingness to receive calls from congregations of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod who are willing to recognize our certification by the faculty of Concordia Seminary in Exile as sufficient for our ministry in The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod.

Without communicating its decision to the Council of Presidents, the Seminex faculty joined the fourth-year Seminex class in seeking calls for pastoral candidates outside of the official procedures. In a letter sent to the entire Synod on May 22, 1974, the Seminex faculty urged:

[We] encourage congregations and agencies in your area to call these men for service in the holy ministry. This is their confessional and constitutional right as was pointed out in a document on congregational autonomy, recently prepared by our Faculty Advisory Committee and mailed to all congregations and pastors.

In response, synodical President J.A.O. Preus, in a letter dated June 7, urged the Council of Presidents not to place, ordain or install graduates of Seminex without proper certification from Concordia Seminary, St. Louis. It had come to Dr. Preus' attention that several District Presidents were apparently planning to ordain and install Seminex candidates without following the proper synodical procedures and defying the spirit of the compromise reached in the May 17 Council of Presidents' meeting. In expressing his hope that God would soon lead those involved to the end of the impasse, and encouraging District Presidents to urge Seminex graduates to follow the proper procedures for certification, Dr. Preus wrote:

I believe that if all of us, by the Council of Presidents, will stick together on this matter and abide by the Constitution, we will find the quickest way out of the impasse with the least amount of conflict in the future, will hasten the solution of the Seminex problem, and open the door to the reconciliation for which we all hope and pray.

The faculty of Concordia Seminary and its Acting President, Dr. Ralph Bohlmann, spent many hours in the summer of 1974 and throughout the following school year in interviewing and processing 1974 graduates of Seminex who wished to serve as pastors of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod and who accepted the Synod's doctrinal position and its constitutional way of life. As a result of these efforts, approximately twenty-five 1974 Seminex graduates were officially endorsed by the Seminary faculty and recognized as pastors of The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod. The 1975 synodical convention turned the responsibility for certifying Seminex graduates over to the Colloquy Board, but few Seminex graduates have applied for certification since that time.

The problem of Seminex certification has become the focal issue in the controversy throughout the Synod. District Presidents who ordained Seminex graduates without proper certification were removed from office at the request of the 1975 synodical convention. This, in turn, has led to severe polarization and even schism within those districts. Likewise, in many congregations served by unauthorized Seminex graduates, there has been a great deal of bitterness and division over the issue. In this tragic situation, the Synod has had to deal not only with the underlying doctrinal problems, but also with the chaos caused by those who sometimes appear to care more about personal positions and prerogatives than about the doctrine and life of the Synod which had been their home.



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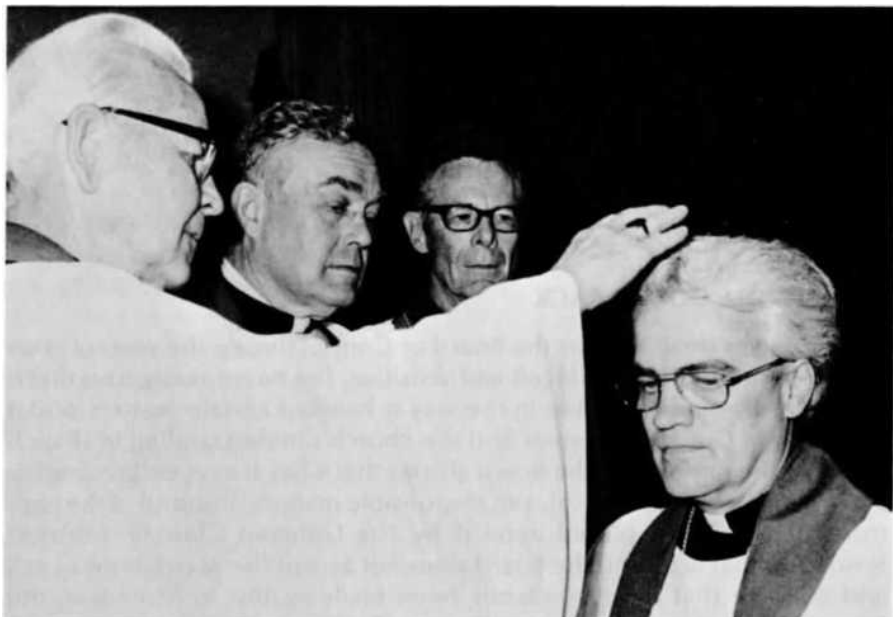
### EPILOGUE

#### CONCORDIA COMES BACK [^](#)

The problems dealt with by the Board of Control during the years of crisis have been exceedingly difficult and sensitive. The Board recognizes that it undoubtedly made mistakes in the way it handled certain matters, and it humbly asks God's forgiveness and the church's understanding in all such cases. At the same time, the Board affirms that it has always endeavored to act in a fraternal, evangelical, and responsible manner, mindful of the high trust that has been placed upon it by The Lutheran Church-Missouri Synod; on that account, the Board does not accept the accusations of evil and injustice that have frequently been made against it. Moreover, the Board of Control continues its willingness to discuss the issues involved in the synodical controversy, and prays that God will grant all such efforts the blessings of His Holy Spirit, so that they may lead to true reconciliation on the basis of the Word of God.

The post-walkout Concordia Seminary is both an old and a new institution. It retains the traditions that go back to its founding in 1839 as well as the magnificent and beautiful campus dedicated in 1926. But, most of all, it continues the doctrinal confession, the synodical loyalty, and the ministerial objectives of its founding fathers.

But it is also a new and growing institution. One of the first recruitment brochures published by the Seminary invited students, "Come Grow With Us." That has happened, and at a rate much faster than expected. The most important growth has been spiritual, but there has been growth in numbers, too. From an enrollment of 193 in the fall of 1974, the student body increased to 284 in 1975 and to 365 in 1976. More than 25 full-time professors and executive staff members constitute the faculty. In May, 1975, Dr. Ralph Bohlmann was called and officially installed as the Seminary's seventh president. Full accreditation has been retained, in spite of the questionable efforts of others to have it destroyed. Financially, the Seminary has remained stable through the continuance of its regular subsidy from the Synod and the generous gifts of its many friends and supporters. New projects and building programs are under way. Loyal and dedicated faculty members, staff persons, and students work together with common commitment, mutual respect, and genuine affection. Most importantly, graduates go forth to preach the Gospel of Jesus Christ to all the nations.



Dr. Ralph A. Bohlmann (right) is installed as Concordia Seminary's seventh president by the Rev. Dr. Herman Scherer. Standing next to Dr. Scherer are synodical President J.A.O. Preus and Board Chairman E.J. Otto.

"Concordia alive and well and living in Clayton," was the way the **St. Louis Globe-Democrat** (September 14-15, 1974) called attention to Concordia's comeback. **Time** magazine (September 9, 1974) noted that Concordia's fall 1974 enrollment was "well above the most optimistic predictions after the split last winter," and observed that "the Synod's conservatives have recovered remarkably." The recovery was indeed "remarkable," for it could not have happened without the remarkable grace, power, and blessing of the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

## SPRING, 1977 [^](#)

It is spring, 1977 as these lines are written. The beautiful majestic buildings still inspire wonder and awe as they have for half a century. There are those who said that Concordia Seminary was entering its death throes in early 1974, that it would soon be empty, silent, and desolate. Voices of doom were loud. The pronouncement of the judgment of God was hurled again and again.

The exodus from Concordia is past. But the campus is not empty; it is alive with people. There are students studying in their rooms and apartments, streaming to and from classes, worshiping and working; they make it a living school. More than 25 faculty members — trained, highly respected,

academically degreed, faithful and dedicated — are equipping these hundreds of young men to be ministers of Jesus Christ and true gifts to the church. Listening and watching the faculty and students together, a sense of joy, a sense of confidence radiates. There is a unity of faith, a unity of purpose and mission, and a unity of dedication to the Lord of the Church that must bring a doxology from the lips of all who love Concordia Seminary and the church she serves.

Concordia is not dead. Concordia lives. There were tremendous struggles and times of despair and fearfulness. There were hurts, tears, and pains. But the faithful men, faculty and students, who remained after the exodus from Concordia have been richly blessed, for they have seen the gracious and wonderful hand of our Lord guard and strengthen them as they labored to rebuild the Seminary. Concordia is alive — not just barely alive, but alive and growing and rapidly regaining her position as a leader in the Christian world. Concordia has already become the third largest Lutheran seminary in the United States, but she has learned to count her strength in God rather than in numbers. There are those who deride her, who still fanatically hope that she will collapse, and who continue to speak the judgment of God on her, but Concordia is alive.

Concordia is grateful, first and foremost to a merciful God who forgives and restores, who lifts up and heals. His blessings are uncountable!

Concordia is grateful to the loyal students, faculty and staff who did not abandon her in her hour of testing.

Concordia is grateful to the families of faculty and students who encouraged and provided that sympathetic presence and assistance which human beings need in the time of crisis.

Concordia is grateful to The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod, whom she endeavors to serve — to its leaders for their help and guidance and to the many congregations, pastors, and laymen throughout the Synod who prayed for her, worked for her, and sacrificed for her so that she would be able to continue to train ministers of the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

May the Lord of the church, who has seen fit to retain this school of the prophets for His service, keep it faithful to His Word and vigorous in its confession of the Gospel.





## APPENDIX A [^](#)

### SCHARLEMANN LETTER TO PREUS [^](#)

*[On April 9, 1970, Dr. Martin Scharlemann sent the following letter to synodical President J.A.O. Preus, requesting a fact-finding inquiry at Concordia Seminary. For background information, see Chapter II, pp. 22-23.]*

Dr. J.A.O. Preus,  
President, Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod,  
210 North Broadway,  
St. Louis, Mo. 63102

Dear President Preus,

For more than two years now my heart has been heavy with the feeling that some major accents of conservative Lutheranism were slowly being eroded in the theological climate prevailing at Concordia Seminary in St. Louis. I have tried in various ways to call attention to and to resist these developments. The effects would seem to be rather negligible.

Now, admittedly, we live at a difficult time of great and rapid changes. To some extent the items I shall list below have their source in current movements and contemporary literature. Yet it is difficult to account for the size and scope of these phenomena if they sprang only from there.

Let me just mention a few of the matters that seem to beset us most here at the Seminary:

1. Considerable ambivalence as to what the Gospel really is;
2. Reluctance to use the distinction between Law and Gospel as a factor in the interpretation of reality in the light of the Biblical revelation;
3. A curious neglect to point out the functional difference between the prophetic and apostolic Scriptures as inspired by the Holy Spirit and the concept of "inspiration" as applied to the contemporary task of receiving and interpreting the living word of Scripture;
4. The kind of commitment to social action which has not reflected sufficiently on the distinction made by our Lutheran Confessions between the kingdom of Christ and political structures;
5. An elastic use of the word "ministry" which results in an apparent denigration of the pastoral office and glamorizing "special ministries", including involvement in radical social action;

6. A strange kind of accent on human relations as something of a means of grace, quite similar to the thought expressed in "Openness and Trust", which says, "We affirm that people use God today also in human relations."
7. A neglect in dealing adequately with that unity in and of God's actions to which all prophets, apostles and evangelists testify, stemming apparently from a rather fragmentary view of individual pericopes, passages and books of Scripture;
8. A deep cynicism on the part of many students as to the significance of the theological task as such;
9. Disturbing talk that it is not really necessary to verbalize the Gospel;
10. Prevalence of the notion that God's presence can be found in the turmoil of the streets, and that, perhaps, the world is a more appropriate place to worship than the sanctuary.

Of late I have been spending some time making inquiry among students in an effort to get some idea as to the size of our problems. I came to the considered conclusion that they exist in considerable proportion. Early in March, therefore, I went to President Tietjen to express my deep concern about some of the matters listed above. In this meeting, the President of the Seminary asked for a chance to begin dealing with some of these issues. We agreed on having a meeting with several of my colleagues on the subject of "inspiration". A session of the exegetical department also came into being, devoted chiefly to the matter of the orders of creation.

These meetings were held and proved to be constructive. Some progress was made. And it is quite possible that, given enough time and energy, we could eventually deal with most of the matters mentioned above in sufficient depth to eliminate most of the dimensions of the problems presently plaguing us.

I am not so sure, however, that we have a great deal of time, especially when it comes to the matter of closing the credibility gap presently existing between the Seminary and significant segments of our church body. Furthermore, I am very dubious that the faculty itself has either the standing or the resources to deal adequately with this particular problem of the credibility gap.

Recent difficulties between the exegetical department and Systematics professors have accentuated the nature of the problems which beset us. Students complain of a kind of theological schizophrenia that tends to beset them when the Scriptures are dealt with so differently.

Doctrinal supervision belongs to the responsibilities of your office. Besides, there ought to be a large measure of confidence in the theological integrity of the Seminary throughout our church body, since its members support this institution with their monies.

May I be so presumptuous, therefore, as to suggest that a competent committee of inquiry be created to look into the matters that threaten to deface the Lutheran character of the life and instruction going on at Concordia Seminary? I would not put this into the form of a question it it

were not for the fact that such an investigation could be turned into something of a political tour de force. And that possibility comes to mind because of what the Presbyterians once did to Charles Briggs.

Of course, the situation was somewhat different: individual members and clergy out in the field kept accusing Briggs of heresy; and the people responsible chose to solve the problem by political maneuver rather than by thorough doctrinal investigation.

Any such committee of inquiry would have to be invested with the authority to insist on answers to specific questions in order to get to the root of the difficulties. That would seem to call for great theological competence on the part of the investigating committee.

It stands to reason that a letter like this has been written and prepared in deep anguish. I have been troubled in conscience for a long time by what one might call the sound of an uncertain trumpet in a great deal of what takes place here under what some tend to call educational experience. In a very real way, the soul of the Seminary and of the Synod is at stake in my request.

Since the basic issue is not one of administration but of teaching and doctrine, I make bold to address the letter directly to you, with a copy to Dr. Tietjen.

In all this I am mindful of the great importance of peace in the church and unity in Synod. It would seem to me that a great contribution to the wellbeing of our church body will be made by the kind of responsible inquiry I attempted to suggest above.

You would surely want to present this matter to the Board of Control of the Seminary to enlist their concern for the future of the Seminary as an institution devoted to the pursuit of conservative Lutheran theology as it distinguishes itself from both Fundamentalism and from Liberalism. If this Concordia can be set to move along this third way, it will make the one contribution to the church life of America which, I believe, the Missouri Synod was established to create and to transmit.

Respectfully yours,

MARTIN H. SCHARLEMANN,  
Graduate Professor of  
Exegetical Theology



## APPENDIX B [^](#)

### FACT FINDING GUIDELINES [^](#)

*[On March 21, 1977, the synodical President, his Fact Finding Committee, a special faculty committee, and the President of Concordia Seminary mutually agreed upon and announced the following guidelines. For background see Chapter II, pp. 23-27. j*

In the interest of mutual understanding, fraternal relations, and the prosperity of the church of Jesus Christ, we affirm an agreement on the following topics which have been an object of concern in connection with the seminary inquiry.

The instructions of the president of the Synod to his fact-finding committee are as follows;

1. The fact-finding committee will explore the confessional position of faculty members on the basis of Article II of the constitution of the Synod, namely, that the Holy Scriptures as the written Word of God are the only rule and norm of faith and practice and that the Lutheran Confessions are a correct exposition of the Word of God. Any questions that contribute to this exploration are suitable.

Article II of the synodical constitution will serve as the sole criterion by which the fact-finding committee will assemble facts for report to the president of the Synod and as the sole criterion by which the president of the Synod will make a judgment about the facts reported to him.

Since synodically adopted doctrinal statements seek to bring Scripture to bear on various topics, they too may be the subject of questions, limited however by the terms of Resolution 2-27 of the Synod's Denver convention. It is agreed that all such doctrinal statements stand under the Holy Scriptures and the Confessions.

2. The fact-finding committee will not request or receive statements by a faculty member about the doctrinal position of a colleague, either by name or anonymously, or about the faculty in general or a portion of it. Such testimony, if necessary, is to be made in accordance with the provisions of the synodical **Handbook**, beginning within the seminary community. The fact-finding committee may ask faculty members about theological issues, including issues on which their colleagues may also hold positions of their

own. However, the faculty member being interviewed is to be asked only about his own position.

This agreement is without prejudice with reference to the action of the fact-finding committee in receiving the statement of a particular faculty member. Because of the campus situation his statement has been forwarded by the fact-finding committee to President Preus for submission to the Board of Control.

3. The synodical president, the fact-finding committee, and the faculty advisory committee will meet again in the event the need arises.

## APPENDIX C [^](#)

### EXCERPT FROM FACULTY MINORITY DOCUMENT [^](#)

*[On February 15, 1977, the five members of the faculty minority presented their document entitled: "Data on Theological Differences within the Faculty of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis," to the Board of Control. The excerpt below followed six points detailing theological differences within the faculty. For background see Chapter II, pp. 27-29.]*

7. In spite of such indications of serious theological differences within the faculty, plans were announced for a discussion at the annual fall faculty retreat on the subject of unity. The discussion took place on the basis of a document prepared by Dr. Richard Caemmerer. It soon became apparent that many members of the faculty were thinking in terms of adopting a statement on faculty unity in order to counteract the presidential fact-finding inquiry. Several of us pleaded that the theological differences among us were so great and so well known that such a statement would be misleading at this time. That point was made, for example, by Dr. Bohlmann in the faculty meetings of September 15 and 29. In the faculty meeting of October 13, President Tietjen's Committee of Five recommended the drafting of a public statement by the faculty and requested written responses from individual faculty members on this and other proposals. Several of us expressed our feelings on these matters to the committee and to President Tietjen. On October 14, Dr. Bohlmann, for example, stated the following in his note to the committee and Dr. Tietjen: "Your sixth point yesterday had to do with the adoption of a faculty statement to demonstrate our unity and confessional stance. In my judgment, the adoption of such a statement would be improper without the resolution of our doctrinal differences in advance". Dr. Robert Preus addressed a similar letter to the president and his committee, emphasizing that he could not sign a faculty statement of unity because of the serious differences within the faculty. In the faculty meeting of October 20, Dr. Caemmerer, chairman of the president's Committee of Five, reported that such letters had been received and would be considered by the committee. Without further authorization by the faculty or even information to the faculty, the Committee of Five prepared a statement known as the "Declaration" and presented it to the faculty in its meeting of November 3, 1970. In the discussion of that statement, several of us rose and pleaded with the faculty not to adopt the statement at this time because it would be misleading in view of the differences within the faculty and because of the presidential



inquiry under way. When President Tietjen stated in that meeting that no one had ever presented him with charges against a colleague, Dr. Bohlmann reminded Dr. Tietjen that he had repeatedly pleaded with him to deal seriously with our differences. Dr. Tietjen acknowledged that this was true and added that others had also mentioned problems to him. When Dr. Damm requested that Dr. Tietjen's statement that no charges had been made against colleagues become a part of the minutes, Dr. Bohlmann also requested that the minutes record Dr. Tietjen's acknowledgment that several people had talked with him about theological differences within the faculty. In spite of such statements by us, the "Declaration" was adopted, and we prepared our "Explanation to Our Brethren" as our way of responding to the faculty resolution requesting an explanation from those who could not sign the majority document.

8. Ever since we issued our "Explanation", President Tietjen has dealt with us in a perplexing way. He has acted as though he knew nothing of basic theological differences within the faculty, even though he obviously did. He has asked us, therefore, to identify the differences, to name names, and to provide him with data. He has asked us how "basic" the differences are. He has taken our action to be a "serious allegation against both the faculty in general and its individual members". He has stated that we "have chosen to make your statement public". He has stated publicly and privately that he is proceeding to deal with us according to Bylaw 6.75 of the synodical **Handbook**, even though there is nothing in our "Explanation" that identifies us as a party to a controversy or disagreement requiring mediation on his part. We have patiently replied to his letters and met with him in his office. We have told him that the differences within the faculty are not all of the same magnitude, but that we believe that they "do indeed have a bearing on the doctrine of the Gospel drawn from the Holy Scriptures and affirmed in our Lutheran symbols", a judgment which he could have made for himself inasmuch as he has been aware of the differences for some time. Some weeks ago, Dr. Tietjen asked each of us for a letter in which we discuss the basic differences within our faculty. We have all written such letters, recounting many of the same incidents reported in this document. Furthermore, President Tietjen has involved the Board of Control in this matter from the very beginning, even before he had taken the time to answer our letter of November 14 which expressed our concern that he had misunderstood and misrepresented our action. From the wording of various Board resolutions on this matter, it has appeared to us that the Board of Control has not had adequate information on the situation pertaining to our "Explanation". We have therefore requested an appearance before the Board of Control in order to provide them with full information.

## CONCLUSIONS

9. How has President Tietjen handled the theological differences within

the faculty during his tenure as president? Unfortunately, President Tietjen has not maintained a stance of neutrality expected of a president in his kind of situation. He has in fact publicly sided with one of the opposing viewpoints within the faculty on some of our most basic theological questions. As is well known, one of the most basic theological differences within our faculty is whether the historical-critical method of Biblical exegesis is being employed at our seminary with Lutheran presuppositions (assuming that to be a possibility). This was really the major point at issue in the discussions held last year between the systematic and exegetical departments, and it remains a serious difference within our faculty to this day. In spite of this fact, President Tietjen has clearly identified himself with one side of this disagreement by stating in writing and before numerous district conventions and conferences throughout the synod that the historical-critical method is employed at Concordia Seminary according to Lutheran presuppositions. Before the Northern Illinois District Convention last June he made his partiality quite clear by means of a public criticism of Dr. Bohlmann and the two-column statement of differences (referred to in paragraph four) which had been drawn up for confidential interdepartmental discussion. In those comments, President Tietjen went so far as to say that “no one in the exegetical department recognized the second column to reflect his views”, and to imply that Dr. Bohlmann was merely “attributing to other people what we want them to say”. By clearly aligning himself with one point of view, President Tietjen has made it totally impossible for him to mediate in this major dispute. If one acknowledges that section 6.75 of the synodical **Handbook** applies to theological differences, it is readily apparent that a partisan president cannot hope to provide the kind of mediation specified there.

10. Not only has President Tietjen displayed partiality in his handling of our basic theological differences, but he has also publicly misrepresented the theological situation at the seminary. We have reference not only to the type of statement referred to in the previous paragraph, but to his statements that our differences are merely matters of “theological emphasis” or “internal problems”. In the November 24 **Reporter**, President Tietjen went so far as to state that “neither the faculty nor I know of any basic theological differences within the faculty involving interpretation of Scripture or the meaning of confessional subscription”. He also stated there that our “Explanation” was “the first time it has ever been formally brought to my attention that some faculty members claim there are basic theological differences”. Both statements are patently untrue, as the documentation of this paper clearly indicates. Such statements not only make the five of us appear to be irresponsible in our judgment, but give the church a distorted picture of the theological situation at our seminary and minimize the need for an inquiry into our doctrine and life. We have repeatedly asked President Tietjen to clarify and correct such misrepresentation of our situation at the seminary and of our action in particular, but to date he has neither explained nor corrected his

Statements. In our conversations with him on December 15, as in his letters before and after that date, he has continued to misrepresent our action and to invoke section 6.75 of the **Handbook**. He has attempted to make a point out of the fact that in our previous contacts with him we had spoken of "tensions" or "problems" rather than "differences". Such a response does not overcome the fact that the president has grossly misrepresented the situation at our seminary to the public.

11. In the **Seminary Newsletter** published in the summer of 1970, Dr. Tietjen stated: "In the year that I have been at the seminary I have pursued every problem called to my attention and have personally investigated every doctrinal issue on our campus". While this statement gives the impression that President Tietjen has exerted a great deal of personal initiative with regard to our theological problems, we feel that the evidence presented above indicates the opposite. The four interdepartmental meetings held last year were held because of the initiative taken by the departments, and no such meetings have been held since last April. We are not aware that the president has used his office to pursue the differences that we have called attention to in the above paragraphs. There has been little opportunity for frank theological discussion in the meetings of the faculty itself. We are not aware that anything has been done to deal with more or less public differences, such as the participation by colleagues in the Openness and Trust venture, or the colleague whose essay was criticized by the Systematics departments of Springfield and St. Louis in the spring of 1970. Furthermore, it seems clear that the synodical **Handbook** expects a seminary president to deal with theological problems as they exist or arise, and not merely when they develop into theological controversies or disagreements that may require the kind of action specified in section 6.75 of the **Handbook**. In spite of this fact, President Tietjen has displayed little initiative in dealing with our theological problems, even when such problems were specifically called to his attention. Moreover he has frequently placed greater stress on procedures supposedly implicit in section 6.75 than on the problems themselves. Certainly the church has a right to expect that theological problems at her seminary will be dealt with when they arise and not merely when they have developed into a controversy or serious disagreement or when someone has made a formal charge against a colleague.

12. We would also note that the seminary administration and faculty have not given our minority position fair publicity, in spite of our pleas that our position is a matter of conscience and that our integrity as theologians is at issue. The [January 1971 Concordia Theological Monthly](#), for example, prints statements adopted by the faculty majority, including the November 3 **Declaration**, but does not print our **Explanation** or even indicate that there was any protest of the majority action. This happened in spite of the fact that our **Explanation**, prepared in response to a faculty resolution calling for a written explanation from those who could not sign the majority statement,

specifically requested that it "accompany any publicity pertaining to the **Declaration**". Moreover, our **Explanation** was sent to the faculty in care of President Tietjen on November 4; it was accompanied by a letter addressed to the faculty specifically asking them for their favorable response to our **Explanation**. Although President Tietjen mailed copies of our **Explanation** to the other members of the faculty on November 6 (together with a letter which stated that he was in the process of dealing with the situation in accord with the Bylaw 6.75 of the **Handbook**) he did not place our request before the faculty for consideration or action. We assumed that this meant that our request for equal publicity would be honored, particularly because President Tietjen had given our **Explanation** to the **Lutheran Witness Reporter** for publication. Because the January 1971 CTM seemed to indicate otherwise, we submitted a resolution to the faculty on February 9 requesting that our **Explanation** be printed in the CTM and that provisions be made for indicating minority sentiment on other faculty statements. The faculty defeated this resolution by an overwhelming margin after it was argued that we had not followed proper procedures for submitting a minority report and our counter-arguments were ignored. In other words, a question of procedure (dubiously interpreted, at that) has been given greater weight than the voice of conscience.

13. Among the more significant conclusions to be drawn from the above data, we call attention to the following:

- a. Basic theological differences do exist within the faculty.
- b. President Tietjen has been made aware of these differences in many ways and in various contexts.
- c. We have encouraged the president of the seminary to deal with these differences, but there is little evidence that he has done so satisfactorily.
- d. President Tietjen may not consider our serious differences in Biblical interpretation and other matters to be "basic".
- e. President Tietjen has become a partisan in some of the most serious differences within the faculty.
- f. Faculty and administrative action toward Dr. Scharlemann last April manifests a serious failure to observe Christian ethical principles.
- g. President Tietjen has publicly misrepresented us and the theological situation at the seminary.
- h. Our action in issuing our **Explanation** has not been handled in a proper manner.



## APPENDIX D

### FACULTY MAJORITY PROTEST DOCUMENT [^](#)

*[On July 24, 1973, the faculty majority, in a public demonstration, issued "A Declaration of Protest and Confession," to protest the actions of the New Orleans convention. For background see Chapter IV, pp. 61-64.]*

#### A DECLARATION OF PROTEST AND CONFESSION [^](#)

In the fear of God and mindful that this may be our final opportunity to speak with one voice we, members of the faculty and staff of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri, take courage from our Lord Jesus Christ to protest actions of the New Orleans Convention of The Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod and to make a confession to our church.

#### WE PROTEST

**We protest the convention's judgment that we teach false doctrine which "cannot be tolerated in the church of God."** The evidence cited in support of the judgment misrepresents and distorts our teaching. We teach what the Scriptures teach, and it is that teaching which the convention has misrepresented and condemned.

**We protest the convention's violation of the procedures for evangelical discipline clearly outlined in the Synod's constitution and bylaws.** We were accused, tried and condemned without due process even though the seminary's Board of Control had already examined us and declared us not guilty of false doctrine.

**We protest the convention's breach of contract in judging and condemning us by a doctrinal standard different from the doctrinal article of the Constitution (Article II),** the platform on which all members of the Synod have taken their stand together.

**We protest the convention's violation of the principle of *Sola Scriptura* (Scripture Alone) in elevating tradition above Scripture.** The convention fettered the Scriptures by requiring members of the Synod to interpret them in accord with a presumed synodical tradition, which the convention defined through the adoption of *A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles*. Like Luther we stand for an open Bible which we are free to read on its own terms, limited only by our voluntary commitment to the Lutheran Confessions.

**We protest the convention's use of coercive power to establish the true doctrine of the Scriptures.** The truth of God cannot be imposed through convention action in adopting doctrinal statements but can only be recognized and confessed by means of the Holy Spirit working faith through the Word of God.

**We protest the convention's unconstitutional act of altering the Synod's confessional standard** by expanding the doctrinal article of the Constitution (Article II) to include doctrinal statements adopted by the Synod and by making such statements binding upon all of the Synod's members.

## **WE CONFESS**

We confess before God and all to whom these words come that **we repent** of what we have done to bring God's judgment upon our church. We ask God and His church for forgiveness.

**We confess our longing for peace and unity in the church.** We seek to forgive as we have been forgiven and to foster the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. We earnestly desire to work in harmony with our brothers and sisters in the Synod and stand ready to enter into discussion with them.

**We confess once again our ordination vow.** Together with the Synod and every member of the Synod we accept *without reservation*:

The Scriptures of the Old and New Testament as the written Word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and of practice;

All the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and unadulterated statement and exposition of the Word of God.

(Article II, Constitution of The Lutheran Church—Missouri Synod)

**We confess that we accept no other doctrinal standard as binding** on our consciences even though we may have to suffer for our stand.

**We confess an open Bible unfettered by any human rules.** With Luther we "acknowledge no fixed rules for the interpretation of the Word of God"— whether historical-critical, grammatical-historical, or any other—"since the Word of God, which teaches freedom in all other matters, must not be bound." ("The Freedom of a Christian," *Luther's Works*, American Edition, Vol. 31, p. 341)

**We confess our determination to oppose any teaching which is less than the full Law and Gospel** which our Lutheran Confessions affirm to be the doctrine of the Sacred Scriptures.

**We confess our resolution to continue to carry out our solemn call to teach the doctrine of the Scriptures** and to prepare students for the Ministry of Word and Sacrament, as long as God gives us the grace to do so.

## APPENDIX E

### BOARD FOR HIGHER EDUCATION CENSURE [^](#)

*[In September, 1973, the synodical Board for Higher Education censured the faculty majority's July 24 protest and called on the Seminary Board of Control to take appropriate action to deal with "this act of rebellion" For background see Chapter IV, pp. 61-64.]*

September 26, 1973

MEMO TO: Board of Control  
c/o Doctor John H. Tietjen, Executive Officer  
Concordia Seminary Saint Louis, Missouri

FROM: Arthur M. Ahlschwede

SUBJECT: "A Declaration of Protest and Confession"

At its September 22, 1973 meeting the Board for Higher Education took note of "A Declaration of Protest and Confession" issued on July 24, 1973 by a majority of the faculty and staff of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis.

The Board for Higher Education stated its regrets that the faculty has accused the delegate convention of having cited evidence that misrepresents and distorts their teaching. This charge is simply inconsistent with the facts.

When the faculty should have been addressing itself to a serious reconsideration of its position, the Board for Higher Education is appalled that instead the faculty accused the convention of violating the procedures for evangelical discipline, introducing a doctrinal standard different from that set forth in the constitution of the Synod, of elevating tradition above Scripture, of fettering the Scriptures, of using coercive power and of acting unconstitutionally. The Board for Higher Education deeply regretted that the majority of the seminary faculty and staff expressed their defiance of the Synod in a public fashion, thus, continuing a long record of unseemingly and unethical use of the public media as a means of embarrassing the church.

The Board for Higher Education is grieved that the seminary majority has called upon others in the Synod to join in a "common movement of protest and confession within the Synod."



Therefore, the Board for Higher Education censures the action of the Saint Louis seminary president, Doctor John Tietjen, and the faculty and staff who signed the declaration of protest and confession. The Board for Higher Education calls on the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, to take note of this act of rebellion on the part of the president and the majority of the faculty and staff and to take forthwith appropriate action to deal with the stance that demonstrates complete unwillingness to cooperate with or respect the Synod.

Finally, the Board for Higher Education expresses its readiness to support the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, and request prompt and necessary disciplinary action.

The Board for Higher Education also resolved that the above resolution be sent to the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary with discretionary authority to share with the minority five and the Synod.

The Board for Higher Education resolved to call to the attention of the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis, Arlis Ehlen's signature on "A Declaration of Protest and Confession" along with President Tietjen's signature under the heading "Members of the Faculty and Staff of Concordia Seminary, Saint Louis on Campus, July 24, 1973."

The Board for Higher Education has on previous occasions officially reminded the administration that Arlis Ehlen's membership on the faculty terminated June 30, 1972.

Since President Tietjen has not made a disclaimer the Board of Control should consider his failure to act as irresponsible or defiant and should take appropriate action.

## APPENDIX F

### BYLAW 6.79 [^](#)

*[Synodical Bylaw 6.79 was revised and adopted at the 1973 New Orleans convention upon the recommendation of the Special Task Force on Accreditation. This Bylaw sets forth the procedures that were followed in the case involving Dr. John Tietjen. For background see Chapter IV, pp. 66-68.]*

#### **6.79 Procedures for Exercising Board Supervision**

a. When the Board of Control receives a charge against any member of the faculty of an educational institution of the Synod, in the spirit of Christian love it shall first call upon the complainant to communicate directly with the person against whom he has a complaint and attempt to find a peaceful and amicable resolution of the matter.

b. If subsequently the complainant desires to pursue the matter, he shall so notify the Board of Control and present the charge in writing, formulated with reasonable definiteness, and the evidence. The Board of Control shall then direct the president of the institution to attempt to deal with it to the satisfaction of all concerned. Charges against the president of the institution shall be dealt with by the chairman of the Board of Control.

If the complainant does not notify the Board of Control and present his charge in writing within 60 days, the Board of Control may rule that the matter has been resolved to the complainant's satisfaction.

c. If the board decides not to proceed, or if the board has not acted within 90 days after the complainant has notified the Board of Control in writing that he wishes to pursue the matter, and if the complainant is dissatisfied and the charge involves conduct unbecoming a Christian or advocacy of false doctrine (Constitution, Article II) the complainant may take his complaint to the District President. If he finds the actions of the District President unacceptable, he may take his complaint to the synodical President under the pertinent provisions of Bylaw 6.80.

d. If the board should decide to proceed, and if the charge is of a theological nature, the Board shall submit the theological question at issue to the Commission on Theology and Church Relations for an advisory theological opinion. If in such a case the Board decides that the charge is serious enough to threaten immediate harm to the accused or others by his continuance as a member of the faculty, the board may suspend the faculty

member from his teaching duties; contractual obligations of the institution, however, shall continue until the charge is resolved.

e. Furthermore if the Board of Control has decided to proceed it shall also direct the faculty hearings committee to hold a hearing with respect to the validity of the charge that has been made. The notification of the hearing, approved and issued by the board through the president of the institution at least 4 weeks in advance and sent to the chairman of the committee, to the complainant and the accused, shall contain (a) a statement of the charge or charges, (b) a summary of the evidence on which the charges are based, (c) a statement that the hearings committee will conduct a hearing and that the time and the place thereof shall be determined by the hearings committee, (d) a formal invitation to the complainant and the accused to attend the hearing, (e) a statement to the complainant and the accused that they are entitled to counsel and (f) the opinion of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations if a theological issue is involved.

f. No less than 2 weeks prior to a suitable date set for the hearing, the accused shall submit to the president, to the hearings committee, and to the complainant his written answer to the charges or he shall state that he desires no hearing to be held.

g. If the accused fails to answer the statement of charges or declares that he desires no hearing to be held, the hearings committee shall consider whether the grounds stated constitute adequate cause for dismissal, and in its discretion may independently investigate the truth of the charges.

h. If a hearing is held it shall be private unless the accused requests a public hearing. However, the president or his representative, and the complainant, the accused, and their advisers shall have the right to be present at the hearing at all times. Opportunity for cross examination and for presenting testimony by competent witnesses shall be afforded.

i. The hearings committee shall forward its findings to the complainant, to the accused, to the president, and to the Board of Control.

j. After the findings of the hearings committee have been conveyed to the Board of Control, the board after hearing whatever additional witnesses it may desire to hear and considering all pertinent evidence, including, if it is a theological issue, the opinion of the Commission on Theology and Church Relations, shall render a decision. This decision shall in no case be rendered without having given the accused a personal hearing, with right of counsel, and with adequate opportunity for the preparation of a response to the charge, as well as having given an opportunity for the complainant with right of counsel to appear before the Board of Control.

k. If the decision of the Board of Control is that the accused is to be removed from the faculty, the Board of Control shall formally, in writing,

notify the accused that his appointment to the faculty is being terminated and shall specify the effective date of the termination.

l. If the charge sustained against the individual is of such a nature that it could disqualify him from further membership in the Synod under Article XIII, the District President of the accused shall be so notified and a transcript of the proceeding shall be forwarded to the District President. The District President shall then proceed in the manner prescribed in the Constitution and Bylaws.

m. If a faculty member has lost his membership in the Synod through the ecclesiastical route (Bylaw 6.80) he shall automatically forfeit his membership on the faculty after the appeals procedure has been applied or after he has failed to file an appeal within 90 days. During the 90-day period and during the appeals procedure, if an appeal is made, the Board of Control shall suspend him from teaching activity but shall continue to meet its contractual obligations.



## APPENDIX G

### STUDENT DOCUMENTS [^](#)

#### 1. STUDENT LETTER SUPPORTS TIETJEN [^](#)

*[On September 24, 1973, the officers of the Student Administrative Council adopted and sent the Board of Control this letter of support for Dr. John Tietjen. For background see Chapter V, p. 71.]*

Concordia Seminary Board of Control c/o The  
Reverend Ewald J. Otto, Chairman 712 Kenwood  
Avenue Quincy, Illinois 62301

Dear members of the Board of Control:

Each one of you has been entrusted with a tremendous responsibility. As members of The Board, you are ultimately responsible for everything which happens in this place, as well as for the spiritual care of everyone who studies and works at this institution. In the carrying out of these responsibilities, you are not only the controllers of this seminary, but you are also our pastors and our brothers in Christ.

It is to you, especially as our pastors and brothers, that we are addressing this letter. Our reason for addressing you is the tremendous concern which we have for our president, John Tietjen. As students, we love him and respect him, and we are filled with sorrow at the prospect of his suspension and dismissal.

It is our sincere conviction that the "John Tietjen" who was described at the convention in New Orleans, in the words of resolution 3-12, is not the man we know. In the many contacts which we have had with John Tietjen, he has proved himself to be a capable president, a Spirit-filled leader and an academic example.

Whatever it was which prompted people to publicly damage Dr. Tietjen's good name and to charge him with incompetence, is something which we do not share and something which we cannot condone.

The command which we have in the Scriptures to speak well of each other and to defend our neighbor's good name, as well as the example of our Lord Himself, who came not to condemn the world but to reconcile it to the

Father, is sufficient reason for us to describe these public charges as loveless and un-Christian.

We believe that John Tietjen is a good steward in the Kingdom of God — made good by the blood of Christ and faithful to his task and his calling in this place. But if anyone is convinced that Dr. Tietjen is not a good steward, then let him look to the Scriptures for some advice as to what to do, and there he will see our Lord Himself, who was never content just to identify a sinner, but instead reached out to that person with a seeking kind of love. As the Good Shepard, Christ does not leave His sheep tangled in the thicket, but leaves His flock instead, in order to save that one sheep who has got himself into a mess which he can't get out of by himself.

Whatever it is which has inspired some of our brothers to abandon Dr. Tietjen, and even to rejoice in his predicament, it is certainly not from God, and it is certainly not the love of Jesus Christ. We are especially disappointed by those who say that this matter is beyond reconciliation.

We therefore urge you with all our hearts to reconsider the suspension of President John Tietjen. Even if you do not agree with him in every matter, you are his brothers in Christ Jesus, and you owe it to our Lord, to our church, to this seminary, and to Dr. Tietjen himself "to defend him, to speak well of him and to put the best construction on everything."

In all humility we urge you: Don't let your minds and your opinions be shaped by the attitudes and the methods of this world, but let your minds be remade by Christ Himself. Remember that you are urged by St. Paul to regard no one any longer from a human point of view. Look upon one another in Christ. Look with His eyes and not your own.

As students, we are convinced that those words which best describe Dr. Tietjen are the words which he himself spoke at the convention, after the presentation of resolution 3-09. He is "a baptized child of God." He is a man not without weakness (none of us are); but he is a man dedicated to giving glory to God and to His Son Jesus Christ.

We want Dr. Tietjen to be able to continue his ministry here at Concordia Seminary.

Respectfully submitted in the name of our Lord,

The Student Administrative Council:

Gerald A. Miller  
President

Michael R. Lohmann  
Vice-president

Robert Heiliger  
Secretary

Adolph A. Wachsmann III  
Director of Campus Events  
Jacquelyn Mize  
Director of Publications  
Robert A. Rimbo  
Director of On-Campus Missions  
Charles P. Boerger  
Director of Off-Campus Missions  
George M. Scheiter  
Comptroller  
Donald Duy  
Assistant Comptroller

## 2. "WITH ONE VOICE"

*[On December 5, 1973, the student body upon the recommendation of the student leadership adopted the statement entitled "With One Voice," in support of the faculty majority. Later the student leadership sent this statement to all members of the Synod. For background see Chapter VI, pp. 87-88.]*

### WITH ONE VOICE

#### An Appeal by the Students of Concordia Seminary

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In the fear of God and mindful of this opportunity to speak with one voice we, the members of the student body of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, take courage from our Lord Jesus Christ to make this statement.

"God has so adjusted the body... that there may be no discord in the body, but that the members may have the same care for one another. If one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together. Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it." (I Cor. 12:24-27)

As members of the Body of Christ and students at Concordia Seminary, we stand with the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis.

Because they have been unjustly condemned as false teachers "not to be tolerated in the Church of God" and because they confess faithful allegiance to "the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments as the written word of God and the only rule and norm of faith and practice" and "all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church as a true and



unadulterated statement and exposition of the word of God", and because they are faithful to their ordination vows, we stand with them.

Because as members of the Body of Christ we do not suffer alone but together, we understand the condemnation of the faculty majority of Concordia Seminary to apply also to us.

We face this condemnation and the crisis it has created in our church in faith, and we will act accordingly and respond appropriately.

There are no easy solutions to our problems and, in fact, we may not be able to resolve the current crisis at Concordia Seminary and in our church. But we will no longer be silent. We will work to redeem this situation by a faithful witness to our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. In Him alone are we free to be the church in this place at this time.

Therefore, we appeal to the Board of Control of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, to reconsider the decisions made at its November 19, 1973 meeting, to renew the contract of Professor Paul Goetting, and to revoke the new retirement policy. We believe these decisions of the Board of Control to be unfair and contrary to good pastoral practice and good Christian conduct. If the Board of Control does not reconsider its decisions it will have proceeded against all the members of the student body.

We believe that the Church ought to know that we are individually struggling with our Christian commitments to the Lutheran Church— Missouri Synod. We do not know what the decisions of the Board of Control mean for our continuing theological education and our future ministry in the Church.

In the face of this uncertainty, we confess our loyalty to Christ Jesus as our Savior and our Hope, and our commitment to the Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments and to all the Symbolical Books of the Evangelical Lutheran Church.

We appeal to the Church, to our brothers and sisters in the faith, to our pastors and teachers, to the President of the Synod, to the District Presidents, to the Board of Control, and to all Christians into whose hand this statement comes for their support and for their fervent intercessions.

In the Name of Jesus Christ and for His Church,

### **3. STUDENT MORATORIUM RESOLUTION**

*[On the morning of January 21, 1974, the students ratified this moratorium resolution proposed by the student leadership. For background see Chapter VII, pp. 94-98.]*

A STUDENT RESOLUTION by students of Concordia Seminary, St. Louis, Missouri

1. Because members of the “faculty majority” of Concordia Seminary have been publicly accused of teaching doctrine which is “not to be tolerated in the Church of God,”
2. Because members of the “faculty majority” have publicly protested these accusations and have declared that they “teach what the Scriptures teach,”
3. Because Dr. John H. Tietjen, who defended the “faculty majority” against these accusations, has now been suspended from his office as president of Concordia Seminary,
4. Because the members of the “faculty majority” are either guilty of teaching false doctrine and, therefore, not fit to be our teachers or innocent of these accusations and, therefore, worthy of exoneration,
5. Because the Seminary Board of Control has not yet decided which, if any, of the members of the “faculty majority” are guilty of teaching false doctrine,
6. Because we, as students of Concordia Seminary, are currently being taught by members of the “faculty majority,”
7. Because we, as students, have the right to know which members of the “faculty majority,” if any, are false teachers and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated, before we continue our theological training,
8. And because our whole theological education has been seriously disrupted and jeopardized because these issues have not been resolved

We, the undersigned students of Concordia Seminary, therefore resolve:

- I. To declare a moratorium on all classes until such time as the Seminary Board of Control officially and publicly declares which members of the faculty, if any, are to be considered as false teachers and what Scriptural and Confessional principles, if any, have been violated,
- II. To spend our class hours, until the Seminary Board of Control informs us of its decisions, communicating to the Board of Control and to the synod at large what we have been taught at this seminary, especially the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ,
- III. To complete our academic requirements for those classes which we will miss according to procedures which are acceptable to those who are responsible for course accreditation.

We make this resolve mindful of the possible consequences of our actions and asking God's blessings upon our labors.

copies to: Dean Kenneth Breimeier

Dr. John H. Tietjen

The members of the Seminary Board of Control

President J.A.O. Preus



## APPENDIX H

### EXCERPTS FROM "OUTREACH" MATERIALS [^](#)

#### 1. INTRODUCTORY STATEMENTS [^](#)

*[As part of their "outreach" materials, students were given this outline to assist them in presenting their assessment of the events pertaining to the suspension of Dr. John Tietjen. For background see Chapter VIII, pp. 105-108.]*

OPERATION OUTREACH + + + + + JANUARY 25-31, 1974

"For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified."  
[sic] (1 Corinthians 2:2)

#### WHAT HAS HAPPENED? [^](#)

THE MAJORITY OF THE FACULTY MEMBERS AT CONCORDIA SEMINARY, ST. LOUIS,  
HAVE BEEN CHARGED WITH FALSE DOCTRINE.

These men have been charged without a hearing before the church. They have been interrogated by methods which many have called unfair and unjust.

PRESIDENT JOHN TIETJEN HAS BEEN SUSPENDED AS PRESIDENT OF THE SEMINARY.

The majority of the St. Louis Board of Control has done this after an attempt to do so was claimed to be unconstitutional in August 1973. Before his dismissal, Dr. Tietjen was offered a "deal" by agents of President J.A.O. Preus to take a call to a congregation. The action of the Board came after Dr. Tietjen's refusal to accept such a "deal."

A GREAT PORTION OF THE ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE SEMINARY HAS BEEN TOTALLY REVAMPED.

Three conservative faculty members hold eight key positions.

THREE FACULTY MEMBERS HAVE BEEN "HONORABLY" RETIRED BY THE BOARD.

In at least two cases, notices of their retirement were slipped under their office doors on the morning of January 21, 1974.

THE BOARD OF CONTROL HAS REMOVED NINETEEN COURSES FROM NEXT YEAR'S CATALOGUE.

One effect of this revision is to leave the seminary without a course on Old Testament creation theology for next year.

**CONTINUING ACTIONS BY THE CTCR PROMISE TO RADICALLY ALTER THE CALL PROCESS IN THE MISSOURI SYNOD.**

Congregations are now encouraged to use A Statement to evaluate call candidates.

**CONTINUING SYNODICAL PRESSURE THREATENS TO DAMAGE THE CHURCH'S OVERSEAS MISSIONS.**

Rev. James Mayer has been fired as Secretary for South Asia by the Board for Missions on January 12, 1974, after having served the church for many years in the area of missions.

## **WHAT HAS BEEN THE RESPONSE? [^](#)**

**"WITH ONE VOICE"**

Students began their attempt to reach out to the synod with a document signed by students which registered our support of the faculty majority in what we consider to be unjust, unfounded, and unchurchmanlike accusations and procedures.

**A MORATORIUM ON CLASSES**

On January 21, 1974, the morning after President Tietjen's suspension, the student body decided by majority vote to suspend going to classes until such time as the Board clears the charges of false doctrine from the faculty majority or specifically states which faculty members are guilty and why.

**.FACULTY SELF-SUSPENSION**

The faculty majority has declared its common confession with President Tietjen and considers itself also suspended by the Board until such time as President J.A.O. Preus clears the faculty's name or specifically supports the Board's decision.

**REACHING OUT**

Students of the seminary are going out to the synod this week to communicate "what we have been taught at this seminary, especially the Gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ."

## **WHY HAS THIS BEEN DONE? [^](#)**

**OUR THEOLOGICAL EDUCATION IS BEING HURT.**

This, as far as we are concerned, is the least important reason. But the fact remains that continuing pressure against the St. Louis seminary from the synodical administration, and lately from the Board of

Control, drains the resources of students and faculty alike and sets brother against brother within the synod. While such highly political actions might create a good arena for a “liberal” education, we have come to see that they do not promote our education for Confessional pastoral ministry among God’s people in the Missouri Synod.

#### THE CHURCH IS BEING HURT.

This is more important and it pains us a great deal. Issues within the Missouri Synod are being decided more and more by shows of raw political power. And as power and legalistic authority are used more and more, the threat of corruption grows. It leads to false charges, unfair dismissals, and fear. It creates an ugly witness to the world. Students and faculty members of the seminary are concerned that these actions do not serve our Lord Jesus Christ or His church. We have placed our careers and our futures in jeopardy to tell the church that her price for such actions may be greater than our mortal lives.

#### THE GOSPEL IS BEING PUT IN SECOND PLACE.

**This** is the most serious threat of all. We know the faculty majority. We have heard them declare the Good News of Jesus Christ in the classrooms, over the lunch table, and from the pulpit. The Missouri Synod also knows that Gospel. But when political power corrupts and controls, then the Gospel is put in second place. Then the church no longer allows herself to be **claimed** by that Good News. Then she seeks other masters than her Lord Jesus Christ. We have been made bold to take the actions we have taken because we are convinced that the Good News of Jesus Christ—that Good News we have learned from the faculty and to which we commit ourselves is being bound and frustrated within our church.

#### WHAT CAN YOU DO? [^](#)

##### YOU CAN GIVE SUPPORT TO THOSE WHO HURT.

Of course that includes the seminary community, but it also includes other men and women and families who have been wounded in the battles of the past four years. How can you support? With your prayers, with your words and letters of encouragement, with financial assistance, with anything that will keep the Gospel freed among us!

##### YOU CAN VOICE YOUR CONCERNS.

If the current power politics and legalistic authority trouble you, you can speak out and write to those who must hear, to boards and leaders.

Our hope and our prayer is that the Good News of God’s forgiveness and love in Jesus Christ continue to be proclaimed in and through the Missouri Synod. To that proclamation we bind ourselves and ask God’s blessing upon our ministry among you.

## 2. STATEMENT OF EXEGETICAL PRESUPPOSITIONS [^](#)

*[This statement was intended to help "outreach" students explain the historical-critical method as a valid method for Biblical interpretation.]*

### A Statement of Exegetical Presuppositions [^](#)

Attempting to interpret the Holy Scriptures, we must first make clear the presuppositions of interpretation with which we work.

The presuppositions can only be affirmed by faith. To an unbeliever these presuppositions can be explained as natural phenomena. But the believer understands these points with the knowledge that God uses natural phenomena as a means of speaking and acting among us.

- I. -There is a God operative in our world today. He is an active force as He speaks and acts in our midst.  
-A portion of what God says and does among us conveys His disaffection with mankind. We experience from His disaffection the sorry state of our alienation from Him. This we understand as Law. -But God also speaks and acts among us with his steadfast love which assures us of His constant presence among us. By this we are made secure. This we understand as Gospel in the broad sense.  
-The experience of Law and Gospel are known to us in our daily lives, yet the words of judgment and the gracious acts of God are most clearly seen in His numerous acts with His people, the children of Israel. The highest testimony, however, is in the person and work of Jesus Christ, who reveals to us the nature of God.
- II. -We believe that the same Jesus Christ bears witness to the principle espoused above. In Jesus Christ, true God and true man, we experience full salvation through His atoning death on the cross. It is possible for all men to see Him in the realm of humankind. But we, believers and members of the body of Christ, through faith believe also in His divine nature.
- III. -As we face the interpretative task of the Scriptures we face the same principle. In God's Providence He has chosen to speak to us through human and historical means. The task of interpreting the human- historical means that He has chosen requires that we use a methodology which considers the human-historical side of Scripture. Thus we use the tools of the historical-critical methodology. The study of the historical is a necessity for EXEGESIS. If one does not study the historical aspect adequately, material that is not in the Scriptures can be added to the text. The study then would be EISEGESIS. The truth that God is coveying [*sic*] becomes clouded.

In order that we are prevented from performing an eisegetical interpretation one needs to be CRITICAL. To be critical means to be

discerning. One must study and evaluate what is the author's message and what is our material.

The historical-critical methodology is necessary in order that a proper distinction between Law and Gospel may be maintained. A proper distinction which allows the Law to Function fully as the Law and allows the Gospel to function fully as the Gospel. Thus the proper applications might be made in homelitical *[sic]* and educational endeavors.

### 3. SYNODICAL SITUATION

*[This statement was intended to help "outreach" students explain the background of the synodical situation in the light of Romans 15:1-13.]*

#### OUR PROBLEM

1. There is a split in the Synod: our church body suffers (cf. v.2).  
Our church as a whole has been hurt—it has received bad publicity, trained men have lost positions of service to the Church, and the LCMS has been diverted from mission outreach by internal problems.
2. There is a split in doctrine: those outside the Church suffer (cf. v.5).  
God's Word is not being "taught in its truth and purity" by the church body as a whole—we would expect that our division in teaching is turning people away from God's message.
3. There is a split between us and God: we suffer (cf. v.7).  
We have **all** been wrong. By our wrong actions in the name of God, God's name is being besmirched—God is punishing us for that now and will surely punish us eternally as well (cf. Dt 5:11).

#### GOD'S SOLUTION

1. Christ brings us together with God (v.7).  
He has made us one with God by fulfilling God's promises (vv.3, 8). Patience and comfort from God enable us to live through crises (v.4).
2. Christ brings us together through one Gospel (vv. 5-6, 8).  
He has brought us to agree in the one hope that Christ is our Savior and Lord (v.13). By the documents produced since trouble in the Synod appeared, He is moving us toward a better understanding of the teaching of Scriptures that gives us hope (v.4). We students are asking the Board of Control of the Seminary to aid that understanding by declaring specifically which teachings, if any, at the Seminary are not glorifying God (cf. v.6).
3. Christ brings us together with each other (vv. 7-9).  
In this dispute in the LCMS, many individuals have discovered that they



are not alone but are supported by many others; Christ gives us the patience and comfort to unite now as a church body (v.5). This dispute reminds us that the common purpose of us all in the Church is the proclamation of the Gospel among the nations (v.9).

The Holy Spirit will give us power that we may increase our faith in Christ our Hope (v.13) and increase our witness in our lives to God our Father (vv.5-6).

#### 4. FACTSHEET ON INERRANCY AND A STATEMENT [^](#)

*[This outline was given to students on "outreach" to assist them in questioning the Synod's historic position on Biblical inerrancy, as well as certain conclusions in **A Statement of Scriptural and Confessional Principles** adopted by the 1973 New Orleans convention.]*

##### FACTSHEET

This sheet is by no means intended as an agenda for discussion but only as a guide for quick reference and documentation.

##### INERRANCY OF THE BIBLE

1. Authorship of the Pentateuch—**later than Moses:** in Palestine already, Gen 12:6, Dt 1:1; Moses dead, Dt 34:6,10; political situation later, Gen 14:14 vs. Jdg 17:18. **not unified:** doublets, Gen 28 & 35, Ex 3 & 6; discrepancies in laws, Ex 28:1 vs. Mt 18:7; difference in divine name (especially Hebrew), Gen 4:26 vs. Ex 6:3; Moses' father-in-law, Ex 2:18 vs. Ex 3:1 vs. Num 10:29. **references by Jesus:** Mt 19:7-Mk 10:3; Joh 3:14, 7:22-23.
2. References to Adam and Eve—**Paul**, Rom 5:14; I Cor 15:22, 45; I Tim 2:13. **genealogies:** I Chr 1:1; Lk 3:38; Jude 14.
3. The Flood—**source division:** J, Gen 6:5-8; 7:1-5, 7-10,12,16b, 17b, 22-23; 8:2b-3a, 6-12, 13b, 20-22; **P**, the rest of Gen 6:5-8:22. **discrepancies:** number of animals, Gen 6:19 vs. 7:2; duration of Flood, Gen 7:12,17; 8:6 vs. Gen 7:11, 24; 8:3-5, 13a, 14.
4. Discrepancies Between Samuel-Kings and Chronicles—**numerical:** II Sam 24:9 vs. I Chr 21:5, II Sam 24:24 vs. I Chr 21:25. **personal:** II Sam 24:1 vs. I Chr 21:1.
5. References to Jonah—**Jesus:** Mt 12:39-41-Lk 11:29-32; Mt 16:4. **Note** that the Good Samaritan teaches truth whether a parable (it is not called one!) or a historical account, Lk 10:30.
6. Identity of the Suffering Servant (Isa 49:6)—Lk 2:31 vs. Ac 13:47.

7. Synoptic Problem—**ancestry of Jesus**: Mt 1:6 vs. Lk 3:31 (cf. II Sam 5:14). **instructions to disciples**: Mt 10:9-10 vs. Mk 6:8-9. **Holy Week**: Mt 21:7 vs. Mk 11:7-Lk 19:35; Mt 21:10-12 vs. Mk 11:11,15; Mt 26:17-Mk 14:12-Lk 22:7 vs. Joh 13:1, 19:31.
8. NT Use of OT—**no such prophecy known**: Mt 2:23 (cf. I Cor 10:4). **wrong reference**: Mt 27:9-Zech 11:12-13.

## INTERPRETATION

1. Use of Extra-Biblical (Pre-Canonical) Sources—I Kg 14:20, 29-II Chr 16:11, Lk 1:1.
2. Interrelationships of Books—**Luther's Works**, vol. 35, p. 397: "Concerning the epistle of St. Jude, no one can deny that it is an extract or copy of St. Peter's second epistle, so very like it are all the words."
3. Differing Theologies—**Luther's Works**, vol. 35, p. 396: "In the first place it the epistle of James is flatly against St. Paul and all the rest of Scripture in ascribing justification to works."
4. On Historicity—**Luther's Works**, vol. 35, p. 361: "To know his works and the things that happened to him is not yet to know the true gospel, for you do not yet thereby know that he has overcome sin, death, and the devil. So, too, it is not yet knowledge of the gospel when you know these doctrines and commandments, but only when the voice comes that says, 'Christ is your own, with his life, teaching, works, death, resurrection, and all that he is, has, does, and can do.' "

## "A STATEMENT"

1. Article I, last sentence of thesis—**Luther** himself is opposed: Weimar Auflage (German edition), 31/1, p. 517. **Paul** omits mention in I Thess 4:13-18.
2. Article II, the third use of the Law (thesis, sentence 2; antithesis4)—**Law always accuses**: **Ap**, IV, 6-12, 34, 38,126-129, etc.; **FC**, **SD** VI, 17-21. third use also accuses: **FC**, **SD**, VI, 3-4, 6-9, 17-21. **antithesis 4 cannot be rejected**: compare wording of "A Statement" with **FC**, **SD**, VI, 3, 6, 17.
3. Article IV—see Luther's Prefaces to the Books of the Bible, **Luther's Works**, vol. 35.



## APPENDIX I

### BOARD RESOLUTION OF FEBRUARY 17, 1974 [^](#)

*[In response to the faculty majority's February 72 ultimatum, the Board of Control passed the following resolution which declares, in legal language, that striking faculty members who failed to resume their obligations had terminated their employment by the Seminary. For background and other actions by the Board to provide for the needs of the former faculty, see Chapter VIII, pp. 115-117.]*

WHEREAS certain members of the faculty, the administrative staff and the guest faculty, since on or about the 22nd day of January, 1974, have failed and omitted to carry out their responsibilities and functions as employees under their contracts of employment, and

WHEREAS, although said members of the faculty, administrative staff and guest faculty whose names are set forth on the schedule attached hereto and made a part hereof thereafter were requested by the Acting President to resume their said responsibilities and functions, said members of the faculty, the administrative staff and the guest faculty have failed and omitted to comply with such request, and

WHEREAS, none of said members of the faculty, administrative staff or guest faculty, has a legal right or other right, while continuing in the employment of Concordia Seminary, to not carry out the responsibilities and functions for which he was employed,

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED:

The Board of Control directs the faculty, administrative staff and guest faculty to resume their respective responsibilities and functions as employees under their contracts of employment on February 19th, 1974, that on or before 12 Noon February 18, 1974 they signify their assent and agreement in writing to Acting President Scharlemann to so resume their responsibilities and functions as aforesaid and those members of the faculty, administrative staff and guest faculty who fail to comply with the foregoing, having heretofore breached their respective contracts of employment, and they being in continuing breach of their contracts of employment have terminated their employment which results also in a termination of all of the rights and privileges of their respective positions with Concordia Seminary, including, but not limited to the following:

1. No salaries be paid to the said members of the faculty and the administrative staff for any period subsequent to the 18th day of January, 1974;
2. No payments be made to any such members of the faculty or of the administrative staff, who provides his own living quarters, for housing allowance or in lieu of rent, for any period subsequent to the 18th day of January, 1974;
3. No such member of the faculty who is housed in any of the seminary-owned homes shall be provided with such housing subsequent to February 28, 1974;
4. No payments shall be made to such members of the guest faculty for services heretofore rendered by them; and
5. All members of the faculty, administrative staff, and guest faculty whose names are set forth on the attached schedule shall remove their personal belongings from offices on the campus heretofore used by them and shall vacate said offices on or before February 28, 1974.

BE IT FURTHER, RESOLVED, that these resolutions are without application to Dr. John H. Tietjen, to whom the contractual obligations of Concordia Seminary continue pursuant to By-law 6.79(d) of the 1973 Handbook.